



Model Railroading in Small Spaces

Plus:

DCC-EX: A Viable Option for DIY DCC

Building a Reefer Kit

2024 LSR Convention Recap

Live Steam Part 3

Winter Board of Directors Report

The Marker Lamp

The Official Publication of
The Lone Star Region of the
National Model Railroad
Association

**Volume 70, Number 1
March 2024**

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The editorial policy of The Marker Lamp, the official publication of The Lone Star Region, shall be to contribute, wherever possible, to the promotion, growth and understanding of the hobby of Model Railroading, within the confines of good taste and responsibility. The Marker Lamp is published once each quarter by and for the members of The Lone Star Region of The National Model Railroad Association. Articles appearing in The Marker Lamp are the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the officers or membership of The Lone Star Region or The National Model Railroad Association.

Address all correspondence, news, photos and drawings to the editor. All material will be gladly accepted and will be used depending on the availability of space and suitability of material. None will be returned unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope is provided. Correspondence relating to Pike Ads and Dealer Ads should be addressed to Steve Sandifer steve.sandifer@sbcglobal.net

Cover photos are from
Steve Jackobs' HO Scale
Austin & Texas & Pacific
(Photos by Peter Kazmir)

Submission Deadlines & Advertising Closing Dates

Spring IssueFebruary 15
Summer IssueMay 15
Fall IssueAugust 15
Winter IssueNovember 15

Internet Post Date:

Approx. 30 Days After Deadline.
Materials received after the deadline
will be held for the next issue.

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President's Message



by Donna Orr
donnalorrtx@gmail.com

Looking Towards the Future

Happy New Year everyone. I hope that your holidays were great and this year is a better one for everyone.

Thinking about what to write in this report that would be interesting to all, I decided to look back to what other LSR Presidents wrote, and what I found was very interesting: Every President had similar or the same challenges. The region has been trying to get youth involved in the NMRA for years. We've been looking at ways to increase membership, how to get more members to volunteer their time, and what to do to make our regional conventions more interesting and attract more members.

Then, on the current Regional Presidents Call, I learned that another region has set up a procedure for retaining rail pass members. The statistics are that only 9 out of every 100 rail passes convert to full memberships. This action plan will be discussed by our LSR Board of Directors and see if there is something similar that our region may do. On another note, our NMRA President Gordy Robinson mentioned that the NMRA membership grew this past year for the first time since 1992. Conventions are always a subject of interest. Our 2024 regional convention "Where the Eagle meets the Chief" in Pasadena, Texas, February 15-17, 2024, was a great regional convention.

I hope you all had a great time.

Have you ever thought about what happened to passenger trains in the US? With a busy transcontinental network of 254,000 miles of tracks at its height a little over a century ago, America moved on trains. In the 1860's we had the first transcontinental railroad. And by the 1900s, almost every American lived within easy access to a train station. Then what happened? One thing, our nation changed their focus to a smaller, fancier transportation: the car. Many miles of track were then turned over to the freight industry. Also, attention was to an interstate Highway system, justified as a national defense program. Highways could be used for evacuation and to transport troops. Money was poured into the modernizing of the passenger network right at the wrong time. But then in 1970 Amtrak was born. Things are not great with Amtrak, since 70% of the tracks it runs on are owned and shared with private freight companies, which gives little control over scheduling delays and maintenance. But Amtrak is what we have for passenger transportation. Will they be able to convince Americans to hop on a train rather than taking a car between major cities? Just a thought.

Another thought - next year is the 90th anniversary of the NMRA. **ML**



From the Editor



by Peter Kazmir
peter@centexnmra.org



Passenger Rail in America

I've had the privilege to travel to Europe many times for work and for vacation, and I've almost always utilized rail transportation while I was there. I've ridden the Eurostar (under the English Channel), French TGVs, German ICE trains, regional and local trains, subways and more. I've enjoyed practically every single ride (except for perhaps the hot London Underground). They are always clean, on time, and plentiful.

I've also ridden several Amtrak trains over the years, starting in the 1980's, including the Empire Builder, Texas Eagle, City of New Orleans, Lake Shore Limited, and the Acela Express. Generally speaking, it's a different experience. Except for the Acela Express, forget about being on time. Plus, relatively speaking, the equipment is much older and less comfortable.

I've heard (and have generally agreed with) many of the arguments: That the US is too large and spread out, that rail travel is too slow compared to flying or too inconvenient compared to driving. That rail only works well in relatively dense areas like the Northeast Corridor, unless you're a tourist or can't afford (or don't like to) fly or drive. That passenger rail needs its own network (or regulations with teeth) to be on time.

However, there have been a number of really interesting developments over the last few years.

The first is the new Brightline high(ish) speed rail in Florida, currently running from Orlando to Miami. They are taking a more European-like approach for aligning the stations with busy, walkable areas and seeing some success so far. They are now looking to expand with a line between the Los Angeles Area and Las Vegas that appears ready to start construction.

The second (and perhaps most notorious) is the California High Speed Rail project, with construction well underway. It is having a number of issues, but it looks like it will become reality sooner or later.

Of course, close to home we've seen an effort for a while to get high-speed rail in Texas, starting with a line between Dallas and Houston (using Japanese Shinkansen equipment no less) with plans to eventually complete the triangle including Austin and San Antonio. That seems to have a less certain future, but

Amtrak is now stepping in to partner in the effort.

There are many other rail expansions in the planning phase now as well, including high speed rail in the Pacific Northwest plus dozens and dozens of Amtrak network expansions across the country (including projects like a potential extension of the NEC to North Carolina and a train between Baton Rouge and New Orleans). Check out <https://railfan.com/fras-long-distance-study-produces-map-of-expanded-amtrak-services/>.

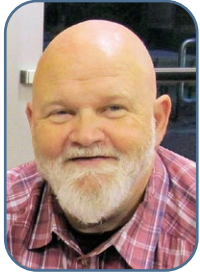
In addition, Amtrak and partners are aggressively working to upgrade its equipment across the country, including next-generation Acela train sets, new Venture coaches and Siemens ALC-42 Charger locomotives (both already rolling out), and the recently announced Airo train sets designed to (finally) replace the Amfleet cars (pictured under Donna's article). Apparently, Amtrak is also (finally) about to publish a request for bids to build replacement cars for the Superliner fleet (which sadly are not likely to be bi-level...I'll miss the Superliners when they're gone).

Many cities are also making serious investments in transit and commuter rail, especially with traffic getting out of control everywhere.

Maybe a new golden age of passenger rail in the United States is on the horizon? Wouldn't that be grand? And fun to model? **ML**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter'.

Up the Tracks Events Calendar



by Bill Dryden
LSR Events Chair

Here are upcoming events within the LSR of which I am aware. I will provide all the information YOU send me or I can glean from other publications, websites, etc., for these events. Additional information may be available through the *NMRA Magazine* and/or various trade magazines or various websites. Also, note that all show times and dates are at the discretion of the sponsoring organization and are subject to change. Please forward any and all information about upcoming events or activities in your area, club, etc., to me, via e-mail at bdr149@airmail.net.

2025 Lone Star Region NMRA Convention

June 26 - 29, 2025

Baton Rouge, LA

Stay tuned to the Marker Lamp and the LSR web page
as more details become available.

Mark your calendars now and plan to attend!

EVENTS AND SHOWS

March

30th (Covington, LA) **First Annual Spring Train Show** (Sponsored by The Railroad Yard & Hubcap Hobbies). Sat. 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Adults \$5. American Legion Hall Post 16, 2031 Ronald Reagan Highway, Covington, LA. More information: therailroadyard@yahoo.com or <https://www.facebook.com/events/677194264487949/>.

April

20th – 21st (San Antonio/New Braunfels, TX) **New Braunfels Model Train Annual Spring Train Show Jamboree** (Sponsored by the New Braunfels Railroad Museum). Sat. 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sun. 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Adults \$10 (14 & older), Child \$2 (5-13 years old). New Braunfels Civic Center, 375 South Castell Avenue, New Braunfels, TX. More information: (830) 627-2447 or <http://newbraunfelsrailroadmuseum.org/nbrr/train-shows/>.

27th – 28th (Galveston, TX) **Railfest 2024** (Sponsored by the Galveston Railroad Museum). Sat. 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sun. 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Members \$15, Adults \$20, Students 16 yrs & under \$15, 4 & under free. Strollers welcome. Harborside Express Train rides \$8 per person. Parking: \$15 online, \$20 at the gate. Galveston Railroad Museum, 2602 Santa Fe Place, Galveston, TX. More information: <https://galvestonrrmuseum.org/railfest/> or (409) 765-5700.

May

20th – 21st (Jefferson, TX) **Historic Jefferson Train Day** Jefferson Convention & Visitors Bureau, Jefferson, TX. More information: <https://www.tourtexas.com/all-events/80891/Historic-Jefferson-Train-Day> (continue to check the website for updates).

June

11th – 15th (Lubbock, TX) **2nd Annual Summer Show at the American Windmill Museum** (Sponsored by the American Windmill Museum and the Lubbock Model Railroad Association). Tue, June 11, 10:00 am – Sat, June 15, 5:00 pm. American Windmill Museum, 1701 Canyon Lake Dr, Lubbock, TX. More information: <https://lmra806.wordpress.com/> or <https://windmill.com/>.

August

24th – 25th (Austin, TX) **51st Annual Austin Train Show** (Sponsored by the Austin Model Railway Society). Sat. 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sun. 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Admission \$8 in advance, \$10 at the door, children 12 and under free. Admission includes both days. Palmer Events Center, 900 Barton Springs Road, Austin, TX. More information: <https://austintrainshow.org>.

September

14th – 15th (Temple, TX) **42nd Annual Temple Model Train & RPM Show**. Sat. 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sun. 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Adults \$10, \$1 discount for seniors, military, and first responders with ID, 12 and under free. Frank Mayborn Center, 3303 N. 3rd Street, Temple, TX. More information: <http://centramodrr.com/train-show/>.

28th – 29th (Dallas/Plano, TX) **Fall Plano Train Show** (Sponsored by the North Texas Council of Railroad Clubs). Sat. 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sun. 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Adults \$10, children 12 and under free (w/adult admission). Plano Civic Center, 2000 E Spring Creek Parkway, Plano, TX. More information: <https://www.dfwtrainshow.com/>.

October

25th – 26th (Fort Worth/Forest Hill, TX) **Red River RPM**. Sat. and Sun. 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. General public admission \$20 for both days, \$10 for one day. Forest Hill Civic Center, 6901 Wichita Street. Forest Hill, TX. More information: <https://www.redriverrpm.org>.

November

16th – 17th (Houston/Pearland, TX) **2nd Annual Houston Area Model Train Show** (Sponsored by the Houston Area T-TRAK Association). Sat. 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sun. 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Adults \$7, 17 and under free. Knights of Columbus Hall, 2320 Hatfield Road, Pearland, TX. More information: <http://houstontrak.org/show/> or http://houstontrak.org/show/PDFs/2024_HAMTS_flyer_half_page.pdf.

26th – 30th (Lubbock, TX) **4th Annual Fall Show at the American Windmill Museum** (Sponsored by the American Windmill Museum and the Lubbock Model Railroad Association). Tue, November 26, 10:00 am – Sat, November 30, 5:00 pm. American Windmill Museum, 1701 Canyon Lake Dr, Lubbock, TX. More information: <https://lmra806.wordpress.com/> or <https://windmill.com/>.

December

7th – 8th,
14th – 15th,
21st – 22nd (San Antonio, TX) **Santa's Railroad Wonderland** (Sponsored by the Texas Transportation Museum). Sat. 5:30 pm to 9 pm, Sun. 5:30 pm to 9 pm (parking opens at 5:15 pm, tickets Sales at 5:30 pm, last Admission 8 pm). Adults \$12, kids (4-12) \$10, kids (Under 4) free, groups (20+, ages 4+) \$10 each. Tickets will be available at the door on limited quantity. Texas Transportation Museum, 11731 Wetmore Road, San Antonio, TX. More information: <https://www.txtransportationmuseum.org/annualevents>.

RECURRING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

LSR Division 1 – Cowcatcher Division – Fort Worth

The Cowcatcher Division meets on the 2nd Saturday of each month at the Texas Western Model Railroad Club, 6808 Forest Hills Drive, Forest Hills, TX. For more information regarding the Cowcatcher Division or its programs, check their website: <https://www.cowcatcherdivision.org>.

LSR Division 3 - Trinity River Division – Allen

The Trinity River Division meets at 10:00 am on the 3rd Saturday of every month at the Christ Servant Lutheran Church, Allen Texas. Occasionally things change due to scheduling conflicts so pay close attention to the email meeting notices that go out a week before the meeting. If you would like to be added to the email list contact Robert Secrest at Robert.Secrest@hotmail.com.

LSR Division 4 – Cen-Tex Division – Austin

The Cen-Tex Division meets bi-monthly at the Austin Northwest Recreational Center, 2913 Northland Drive, Austin, TX. Meetings are held at 10:00 am on the 2nd Saturday of the *odd* months and include clinics, show-and-tell, DCC minute, social activities and a layout open house. For more information about upcoming meetings, see <https://centexnmra.org> or contact director@centexnmra.org to be added to the mail list.

LSR Division 5 - Texas Panhandle & West Division

Division 5 holds their meetings virtually on Zoom on the 3rd Monday of each month starting at 7:00 pm. Anyone that can join via Zoom is welcome to attend. Use this link to sign up for the division's monthly bulletin and keep up with events and happenings in the division: <http://eepurl.com/hRLlm9> or email Headroadie2004@gmail.com.

LSR Division 6 – South Texas Division – San Antonio

The South Texas Division hosts meetings on the 2nd Saturday of *even* months at 11:00 am at the Longhorn Cafe at 12311 Nacogdoches Road in San Antonio. Please come out and join us for clinics, show-and-tell, tip and tricks, and the ever-popular Deal-or-Duds, along with great fellowship. For more information contact. Don Winn at donswinn@gmail.com

LSR Division 8 - Texas Gulf Division – Houston

Division 8, the Texas Gulf Division, meets the 2nd Saturday every *odd* month from 10:00 am to 12 Noon at the Tracey Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Drive, Houston, TX 77042. For more information contact Phil Stewart at pstewart1225@yahoo.com.

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Alamo Model Railroad Engineers - San Antonio

The Alamo Model Railroad Engineers meets the 2nd Friday of the month at 7:30 pm in the Zucht Building at the Texas Transportation Museum, 11791 Wetmore Rd., San Antonio TX. For more information call Peter Shavney (210) 317-3661 or Gene Turner (210) 355-2777; or visit the web site www.alamomodelrailroadengineers.com.

Austin Model Railway Society - Austin

The Austin Model Railway Society is a HO scale modular group that is open to new members and meets once a month. For more information please email Steve Jackobs at president@austinrailway.org or visit the web site www.austinrailway.org.

The Greater Baton Rouge Model Railroaders - Jackson

Our mission: to educate and inform the public on the hobby of model railroading, associated disciplines, and to entertain both children and adults through our numerous displays featuring both model trains, real railroads and railroad safety. The Trains run from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of every month! THE PUBLIC IS INVITED! Located at the Republic of West Florida Historical Museum, 3406 College St, Jackson, LA. More information: <http://www.greaterbrrailroaders.com/>.

Houston Area "G" Gaugers - Rosenberg

On the 4th Sunday of each month, the Houston Area "G" Gaugers (HAGG) model train club meets at the Rosenberg Railroad Museum to run their special trains on the tracks of the Garden Railroad Exhibit. The museum also hosts fun seasonal activities for the kids on this day. Steam engines, circus trains, patriotic trains or everyone's favorite Thomas? You never know what trains you'll see. Rosenberg Railroad Museum, 1921 Avenue F, Rosenberg, TX. More information: info@RosenbergRRMuseum.org.

Houston Area Live Steamers

HALS has over 9,000 feet of track for you to enjoy and ride on most any Saturday of the year. Someone is usually there every Saturday with special run, operations, waybills/timetable, work and fun run days scheduled throughout the year. Our public run days are the 3rd Saturday of the month March through November. Come see our 2,500 foot expansion in Phase 4. Model Railroaders (any scale) are welcome to attend most any time. Check our web site out at www.hals.org for schedule of events or e-mail Rick White at rick.white.jr@gmail.com for more information.

New Braunfels Railroad Museum

Kids Fun Day is held on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the New Braunfels Railroad Museum, 302 South San Antonio Street (in the 1907 Restored Railroad Depot), New Braunfels, TX. Museum phone (830) 627-2447. Kids of all ages will have the opportunity to run model trains and become a Jr. Engineer. Also among the displays at the Kids Fun Day will be a large US Army Model Garden (G) Scale and Lego Trains. Visit our Steam Engine, Caboose, Dining Car (available for Birthday Parties) and Box Car. There will be other fun, train related activities, additional model trains, train artifacts, our 1907 depot are on display. The Railroad Museum opens at 10:00 am on Saturdays. For field trip scheduling and more information, call Susan Riordon (210) 542-6121, or visit us at www.nbrrm.org.

North Texas Council of Railroad Clubs – Irving

The North Texas Council of Railroad Clubs (NTC) meets the 3rd Tuesday of the month. Visit the website www.dfwtrainshows.com for more information about the NTC, its meeting site, member clubs or sponsored events.

San Antonio Model Railroad Association - San Antonio

The San Antonio Model Railroad Association, SAMRA, is open to new members and meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at 7:30 pm in the Bob Clarke Rail Heritage Museum, 7702 Narrow Pass, Live Oak, TX. Please visit our website www.samratx.org for information about our activities and their dates and times. Also, like us on Facebook.

South Texas Railroad Socials – San Antonio

The "Socials" are a casual gathering of train folks in South Texas, both modelers and prototype railfans. We gather quarterly for a couple hours of Clinics and Presentations, Show-n-Tell, regional news, Q&A and funny video clips. Not a meeting, not a club, just buy lunch at the restaurant and use their party room. Meetings are both in-person and virtual (via Zoom). Plus, we have Shop Talk, a quarterly 'project guys' round table gathering, in between the Socials. Read more, see photos from past Socials and find our next date, at www.SouthTexasRR.com.

Texas Northern Model Railroad Club – Dallas (North)

The Texas Northern Model Railroad Club business meeting is the 1st Thursday of the month and has regular meetings on Thursday evenings and most Saturdays. If you like to operate, come by on Tuesday nights to join our weekly operation session. Located in North Dallas at 11999 Plano Road., Suite 154, Dallas, TX 75243. For more information: www.texasnorthern.org.

Texas Western Model Railroad Club – Forest Hills

The Texas Western Model Railroad Club meets for its business meeting every 1st Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. The Club is located at 6808 Forest Hills Drive, Forest Hills, TX. For more information: (682) 587-2092 or www.twmrc.org or email cdo@twmrc.org.

EXCURSION TRAIN TRIPS

Austin Steam Train; Cedar Park, TX; (512) 477-8468; www.austinsteamtrain.org

Grapevine Vintage Railroad; Grapevine, TX; (817) 410-3185; www.gvrr.com

Old Hickory Railroad; Jackson, LA; (225) 634-7397; www.louisianasteamtrain.com

Texas State Railroad; Palestine & Rusk, TX; (888) 987-2461; www.texasstaterr.com

Please consider our deadlines for submittals and publications to allow adequate lead time to correctly announce your event. Column submission deadlines are the 15th of February, May, August, and November. Publication of the *Marker Lamp* is the following month. **ML**





Whose track goes there?

Can you figure out whose layout this photo is from? If you are the first person to email the correct answer to rrduino@huntatrophy.com you'll win a campfire lighting Arduino!



SurfLiner 2024

NMRA National Convention



August 4-11, 2024
Long Beach, California

SurfLiner2024.org

Make plans now to join us at the Westin Long Beach, just two blocks from the beach, harbor and pier! Activities are planned to include:

Operating Sessions - Layout Tours - More than 100 Clinics

Prototype Tours: Los Angeles Union Station, Southern California Railway Museum, Travel Town Transportation Museum, Rail Giants Train Museum, Metro Rail Fleet Services Facility, Self-Guided Tours of Tehachpi Loop and Cajon Pass

General Interest Tours: Queen Mary, Catalina Island, Nixon Presidential Library, Warner Brothers Studio Tour, San Antonio Winery



Register Today!

National Train Show
free, early access included with registration



DCC-EX

Entry-level, inexpensive DCC for tech nerds, or a real option for everyone?

by David McMorran
Melbourne, Australia
davemc8992@gmail.com
Photos by the Author

DCC-EX is an inexpensive DCC system built with standard circuit boards and a standard DC power supply, all readily available from electronics stores for an all-in cash outlay from about \$40 for a basic system, up to about \$150 all up for a high-powered 5 Amp system. (Figure 1).

You can download the DCC-EX installer for free from dcc-ex.com. Push the circuit boards together, connect to your computer with a USB cable, start the installer, answer a couple of simple questions about what components you have (Figure 2) and let the Installer do the rest. Barely a few sips of coffee later, it's all done. The instructions are clear and simple, and no technical knowledge is needed.

The 'EX' is a clue that DCC-EX has extra capability beyond just a DCC command station. Among other things, you can:

- Run trains using Engine Driver / WiThrottle devices without the need for JMRI or a computer
- Run trains with EX-WebThrottle using a browser (Chrome, Opera or, Edge) on a USB-connected device (not requiring JMRI)
- Run a DC layout using either of the above
- Create a roster of locomotives though not to the extent of a JMRI roster
- Control directly connected servo motors for points or other devices

According to the DCC-EX web site, the EX-Rail component of DCC-EX can:

- Create 'Routes' which set multiple turnouts and signals at the press of a button in EX-WebThrottle, Engine Driver, WiThrottle, or other WiThrottle-compatible throttles as available
- Automatically drive multiple trains simultaneously, and manage complex interactions such as single line working and crossovers by setting up Automation 'Sequences'
- Drive trains manually, and hand a train over to an Automation
- Animate accessories such as lights, crossings, or cranes
- Intercept turnout/point changes to automatically adjust signals or other turnouts
- Turn on the coffee pot when the train reaches the station

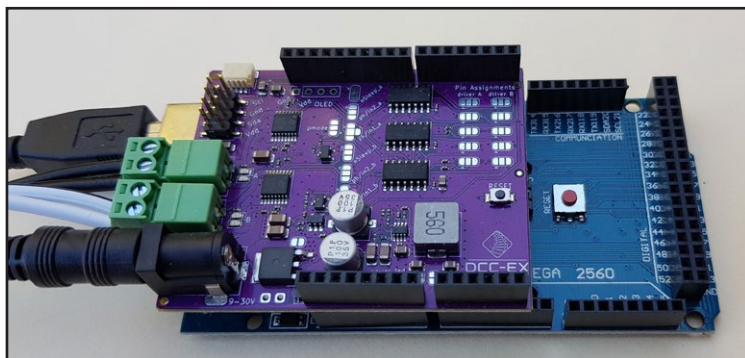


Figure 1: DCC-EX: plugged in and ready to go, without the Wi-Fi add-on.

The automation/animation tasks mentioned above can be time-scheduled using the EX-FastClock.

A turntable controller is being developed.

Much like JMRI, DCC-EX is open-source software, developed and maintained by an excellent team of very competent, friendly and helpful hobbyists spread across the globe. That means the software is continuously improved to address problems found and to explore new ideas. The team uses a Discord chat channel <https://discord.gg/y2sB4Fp>, open for anyone except for some sections restricted to the DCC-EX team.

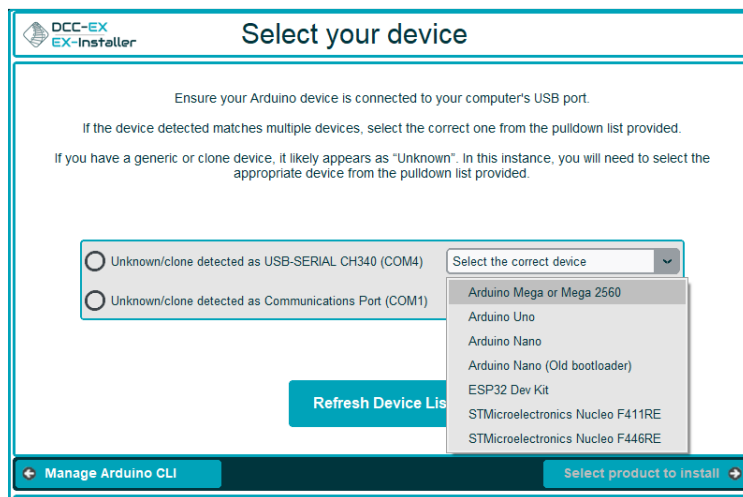


Figure 2: Selecting my Arduino Mega (clone) from the drop-down list in the Installer.

For those wanting to know, the circuit boards are Arduino programmable boards and Arduino motor shields which are designed to drive DC motors but are well suited to generate DCC power.

DCC-EX is the evolution of DCC++ which has mainly been used by technology tinkerers due to the need to be familiar with Arduino IDE or by others seeking a less expensive entry point for DCC and having a technology tinkerer helping them out. The nerdy name DCC++ is a portmanteau of DCC and C++, the name of the programming language used for Arduinos.

The software has been rewritten to be more efficient and expandable and renamed to a more user-friendly DCC-EX, reflecting the extra capabilities being added to it, well beyond just being a DCC command station.

My introduction to DCC-EX

I had an Arduino MEGA2560 sitting abandoned in my drawer for several years, 'gifted' to me, no longer needed by its previous owner. I had no idea at the time what it really was, what it could do nor what I could do with it. Years later, after learning about Arduinos and hearing of DCC++, I combined it with an old laptop power supply that was gathering dust and bought an Arduino clone motor board, giving me a functional DCC system for less than \$10. It was used on rare occasions for testing and decoder programming.

Earlier last year, tiring with my old Digitrax DCS50, the release of the EX-MotorShield8874 motor board inspired me to upgrade my DCC++ to the latest DCC-EX and look further into the capabilities of DCC-EX with the new motor board as a possible replacement for the DCS50. As a self-confessed technology tinkerer, I'm always eager to learn more and do more than my small layout really needs.

Digging deeper into DCC-EX

The comments here are my assessment of DCC-EX (specifically Version 5 released in August 2023) and its capabilities, based on my short experience with it. I'm not an expert on DCC-EX, not familiar nor experienced with everything it can do but it is now running my layout assisted by JMRI. My views may change with more experience and awareness. I haven't covered everything here but hopefully the most important aspects.

Short circuit handling

Short circuits are a part of model train life, some are intentional by design and some from less than perfect track work or operational practices. Tam Valley Frog Juicers (I don't have any), auto-reversers (I have a PSX-AR), circuit breakers (I have 2 PSXs) and command stations / boosters are all trying to detect and resolve short circuits for different purposes. For them

all to do their intended task, their response speeds need to occur in the sequence listed above, quickest to slowest. If the booster acts first and shuts down, nothing else gets a chance to do what is intended of it, the Frog Juicer can't switch the frog polarity if power has already been shut down.

Having tangled with this issue before, my first concern with DCC-EX was how fast it cuts track power when there is a short circuit and whether it would play nicely with those other items mentioned above. The first answer is very, very fast if you have their 5 Amp motor shield, it's a hardware feature of the motor shield itself. However, very, very fast is too fast. Fortunately, the software gurus have done some magic and worked out a way to immediately switch power partly back on, fast enough for those other things not to notice that anything happened and just enough for them to do their job. DCC-EX reverts to full power once the short has cleared but if not cleared within a short time, it switches power off, waits a bit, then restarts. If it again fails, the cycle repeats with the wait time doubled each time so before very long, it is off for quite some time. The result is that it plays very nicely with my PSX units, letting them do their jobs so I've ticked off that concern. Even better, it gives me an opportunity to dispose of the circuit breakers completely.

Each motor board has two outputs, typically one for track power and one for programming track, though both can be set as track power which can give you two power zones, each with its own very, very fast circuit breaker. Whilst officially 'not yet fully tested and supported', DCC-EX caters for stacking two EX-MotorShield8874 motor boards. This can give you four power zones that may no longer need circuit breakers. The cost saving puts you well in front.

DC

DCC-EX can be used to run a DC layout. This is old fashioned DC, nothing to do with DCC or address zero. One or more DCC-EX track outputs can be assigned as DC, each output behaving as a PWM DC throttle, controlled wirelessly from Engine Driver / WiThrottle. Of course, the phone throttle can only control a section of track rather than a specific train - the number you assign is a track section number instead of a DCC loco address. If you have two motor boards, then you can have four DC zones and use four phone throttles.

Depending on what suits your layout and your desire, you can allocate part of your layout as DC and part as DCC. I don't recommend that, it's risking accidentally bridging the two which may risk leaking some magic smoke. Alternatively, you can run DCC on your layout today, then change the zone allocations and run DC tomorrow. DC zones individually can be allocated with polarity reversed by software, if needed. (Figure 3) Depending on your layout configuration, this may make it easier to switch between DCC and DC without needing to unplug any wires. Those old locos that you haven't put decoders in can be reborn.

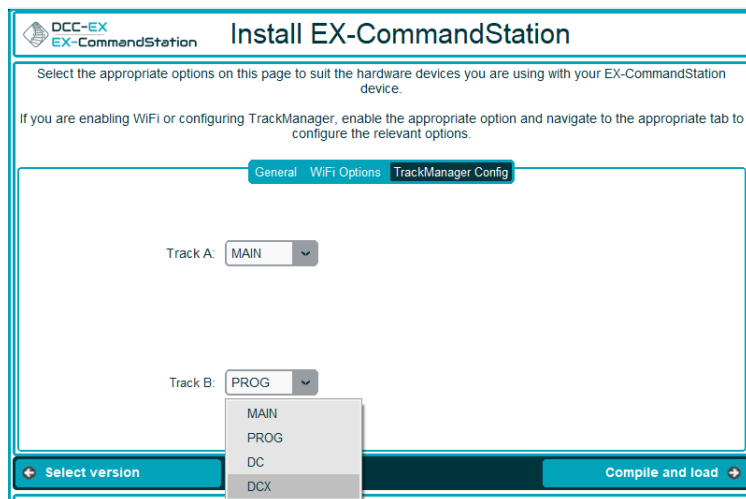


Figure 3: Selecting track power modes.
DCX is reversed-polarity DC.

Some occupancy detectors cannot be used with DC track power so, if you have those, switching between DC and DCC may not be feasible for you.

Auto-reversing

Extending the concept of switching polarity through software, one of your outputs could conceptually become an auto reverser+circuit breaker - on detection of a short circuit, first reverse the polarity but if that doesn't clear the short, then cut power. This is not currently available in DCC-EX but the developers are aware of the possibility. I think it's a no-brainer addition though that's easy for me to say, I'm not doing the coding. For the price of half a 5 Amp motor board, you could have a very, very, fast auto reverser / circuit breaker.

Attached accessories

The Arduino data pins can be used for throwing points with servo or solenoid motors, to drive servo motors for other purposes such as controlling boom gates (complete with bounce), as sensor pins, or for setting signal lights. The Arduino Mega has dozens of these data pins but even so, they quickly run out on a larger layout. They are working on pin-extender boards. These accessory components are added to the associated JMRI component tables so can be controlled through JMRI, if desired, or controlled by WiThrottle via Wi-Fi directly to DCC-EX.

JMRI useful but not essential

JMRI and the computer it runs on are useful but not essential components for DCC-EX. DCC-EX has its own WiThrottle server so Engine Driver/WiThrottle phone throttles can connect to it over Wi-Fi. DCC-EX has extensions to the standard WiThrottle protocol which recent versions of Engine Driver can use giving additional capability to control DCC-EX

from your phone when directly connected via Wi-Fi. Obviously, this requires the Wi-Fi connection to be added to DCC-EX.

DCC-EX can maintain its own locomotive roster and turnout, route, sensor and signal tables, referred to as 'objects'. So, depending on the complexity of your layout, you may be able to achieve what you want solely from DCC-EX without using JMRI.

The DCC-EX Wi-Fi can be set up as an access point, i.e. its own network, so you can connect your phone to that Wi-Fi service to run your trains and the layout. However, the Wi-Fi devices likely to be used with DCC-EX will likely have quite low session limits, i.e. not many phones can connect at a time, and these can be quickly used up when you have friends visiting. Guests who have used your train network before and have the network connection set to auto connect may find their phones connect as soon as they get within range even if they're not running trains.

Alternatively, you can set your DCC-EX Wi-Fi in "Station Mode", i.e. configure it to connect to a Wi-Fi Router and also connect your phone to that Wi-Fi Router. You can use your home Wi-Fi or, if you have one, an old Wi-Fi Router from an old broadband connection. Otherwise purchasing a simple Wi-Fi Router may be a worthy investment, it doesn't need high capacity, nobody will be watching Netflix with it.

Automation

DCC-EX can also perform 'sequences' - defined sets of actions triggered by events and/or conditions, for example, when these points are thrown then set this signal to red and that signal to green. Sequences can also be used to automatically run a train - assign the train's DCC address, start moving, change speed, stop and throw points and signals for the path ahead.

There's more

Yes, there's more but this is enough for today and I haven't checked out all of it. For a more complete description of what DCC-EX can offer, check their website at dcc-ex.com.

What Do You Need and What Does It Cost?

The notes below are to give you a feel for what is required and approximate cost. There are many to choose from, I'm not guaranteeing anything so please check the specifications for yourself or get someone to help you. You can ask on the "DCC++ and Arduino Model Railroading" Facebook page or the Discord channel.

An Arduino

Whilst DCC-EX can use an Arduino Uno R3 (about \$10) with restricted capability, you will soon regret not paying

the extra for an Arduino MEGA2560. You can get a clone for about \$20. The Uno is too slow and too low capacity to cope with what most people will use. The recently released Uno R4 has quite adequate capability but is incompatible with DCC-EX. It needs a lot of programming to be done by the DCC-EX volunteer developers who probably have higher priorities so it may or may not ever get there.

A motor shield

There is a list of supported motor shields on the DCC-EX website <https://dcc-ex.com/reference/hardware/motor-boards.html>. I recommend using one of the 'easy' boards; the rest are harder to set up so why bother?

The Arduino Motor Shield R3 and the Deek-Robot Motor Shield seem to be popular choices and cost about \$25 though cheaper clones can be found on online stores. The EX-MotorShield8874 is the 5 Amp board designed by the DCC-EX team for DCC-EX. Check the site for sources near you: <https://dcc-ex.com/reference/hardware/motorboards/ex-motor-shield-8874.html#how-can-i-get-one>.

For those keen, the gerber files have been published and the copyright allows for small quantities to be manufactured for non-commercial purposes and assembled from your favorite PCB manufacturer. I don't know the cost of these.

A Wi-Fi connection

This is essential if you want to use any of the Wi-Fi features *[including WiThrottle-compatible physical throttles, such as those available from TCS. -Ed.]* and useless if you don't use those features, i.e. always run with a USB connection to a JMRI host computer.

The DCC-EX team recommends the Makerfabs WSP8266 Wi-Fi shield. I don't know where these can be found in Australia. Equivalent boards can be found on eBay for about \$20 or under \$10 from China. This simply plugs in on top of the motor board. It will require two wires to connect to the Rx and Tx pins on the Arduino Mega.

A power supply

If using one of the older motor shields, a 12V 2 Amp wall wart power supply may be adequate. These can be locally sourced for about \$25.

For the EX-MotorShield8874, a 12V 5A power brick costs about \$50. If you don't need 5 Amps, you can pay less for lower amps but you still get the benefit of the super-fast power management this board provides. These prices are just ballpark estimates, prices vary depending on where you shop. Prices are in Australian Dollars.

DCC-EX is Now the Real Deal

With the release of DCC-EX version 5 in August 2023 and the 5-Amp EX-MotorShield8874 motor board, designed by the DCC-EX crew, released in May 2023, I think DCC-EX has now entered the big league, very capable of running large, complex layouts, especially if partnered with JMRI. 5 Amps will run a lot of N scale trains, even a lot of HO trains.

Once the double-stacked motor boards are production ready, DCC-EX will allow 4 power zones without the need for circuit breakers or boosters. The ability to easily switch your layout between DC and DCC opens new opportunities for simple, cordless Engine Driver / WiThrottle control of a DC layout and a new life for old locomotives. In my opinion, adding an auto reversing option would nicely round out the power management requirements for many people.

Whilst lacking the depth of functionality of JMRI, the roster, layout accessory control and automatic running functionality within DCC-EX may be adequate for many people therefore not requiring JMRI or a computer. It's not a choice of one or the other, you can have both. Bypassing the computer USB connection requires a Wi-Fi connection.

Whilst Wi-Fi options can use the DCC-EX onboard Wi-Fi as the Wi-Fi router, I recommend using a separate Wi-Fi router for a more robust network.

Using Arduinos, motor shields and stuff may sound technical and uninviting. Fear not, you don't have to be technology-minded to use it. I drive a car but have little knowledge of, and don't really care, how it works beyond turning a key (I don't even do that anymore, my key stays in my pocket!), and using the steering wheel and pedals. Using DCC-EX as a DCC command station is quite simple, arguably less complicated than other DCC systems. As with other systems, DCC-EX gets more complicated to set up for more complicated needs such as multiple power zones using multiple motor shields and for setting up automation and directly connected servo motors, etc.

Whilst having turnouts, sensors and signals wired directly to the Arduino data pins may be useful and adequate for some, I prefer and will continue to have control of these distributed around the layout rather than a plethora of wires radiating out from the command station. For my needs, I will continue to use JMRI for layout control with DCC-EX for DCC track power management and make use of DCC-EX's extra capabilities where it suits me. These choices come down to personal preference and layout requirements.

I think DCC-EX is indeed a viable option for serious consideration for layout control for anyone. Whilst it is a low-cost package, it's a very capable package though it may not suit everyone's needs.

I haven't yet worked out how to get DCC-EX to turn on my coffee pot when a train reaches the station. I'll have to work on that. **ML**

Building a Reefer

by John Garfield

Photos by the Author

As some know, I enjoy building old kits. They used to be easy to find but it is getting harder to find them today. I scan various train shows but seldom find anything worth buying. Usually, I can get an old kit of either all wood construction or, in some cases, an old plastic kit. Some have lettering, etc. already on them some have old decals (which are often deteriorated).

Below you can see some of the kits I have built over the last 40 years, both wood and plastic. (Figure 1)

My latest is an old wood kit I bought 40 years ago and finally put together. It is labeled as a Main Line Model but what was attractive about it is that it is an NMRA conference model from the 1962 Thousand Lakes Conference - not that I attended the conference as I was about 14 at the time but because it represented railroading when I started getting very interested in the hobby as a teenager. Being as the National Convention was coming to Fort Worth area last summer, I decided this was a good model to build now.

The kit is all wood but has preprinted sides identifying it as a representative of that conference as seen in Figure 2. In this photo the underside is built but all other parts are still to be attached.

In Figure 3, you can see the sides, ends and doors attached. I am also building up the end cushion blocks and getting ready to add the ladders, stirrups, couplers and wheels. Of



Figure 2: The kit out of the box, with the underside built

course, the couplers are not provided in these old models nor are the wheel sets. I always use Kadee couplers and I usually have some old wheel sets that will work. No real detail is provided on braking and, as it is on the bottom and not easily seen, I don't worry about it.

Finally, in Figure 4, the end sills are completed, couplers and trucks added along with ladders and stirrups. This makes the model complete. It now runs on my railroad featured in the Fall 2017 Marker Lamp. **ML**



Figure 1: Some of the author's previously-built kit

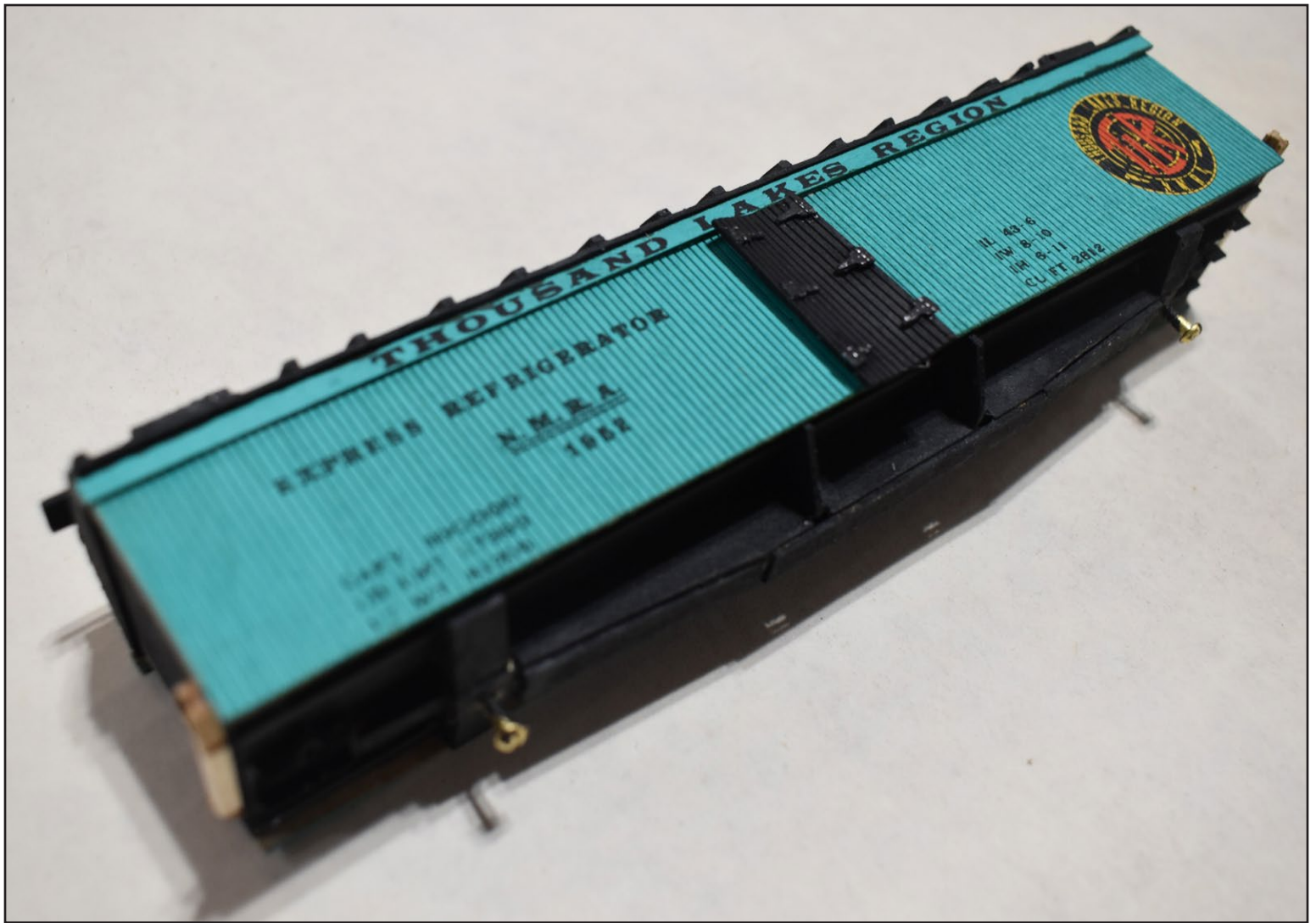


Figure 3: Sides, ends, and doors in place with the end cushion blocks in progress



Figure 4: The completed model



WHERE THE EAGLE MEETS THE CHIEF

**THE 2024 NMRA LONE STAR REGION CONVENTION
FEBRUARY 15-17
HOUSTON/PASADENA, TEXAS**

Convention Recap

Photos by Geoffrey Hognio and Tom Weaver



After attending the LSR convention in Houston I wanted to share some of my thoughts and opinions. Over the last five years we have had to change the way we conduct business in a variety of endeavors. Many factors such as time and money are just some of the variables that weigh in on how a convention is planned and your decision on whether to attend.

When I attend a convention, I am looking to renew friendship with people I have not seen in a while and to make new ones. Another goal is to learn new techniques and to confirm my thought process in building projects. This year's convention's unofficial theme was "get off the couch and do something." The presentations helped to inspire and motivate the creative juices in the attendees so they can go home and create a better product. An underlining theme was that you can do this, and we will show you how we accomplished it. Presentation after presentation demonstrated that with a little effort you can create something that you will be proud of. The number of MMR's attending was amazing. They all took the time to share what they have learned and how you can accomplish the same task. They encouraged members to step out of their comfort zone and to elevate their modeling skills.

This is what I personally took away from this event. I was able to sit down with people that I have known for a while and exchange ideas and thoughts. During the weekend one of the neat things is meeting new people and I enjoyed getting to know them. After talking with one such person we discovered that we came from the same part of the country called the Great White North. I look forward to getting together and sharing more stories and items of interest. Developing comradery among railroad modelers is one of the highest priorities for a convention. When you ask a modeler what his favorite part of the hobby is, making friendship is high on the list. Visiting other layouts and operating on some of them, will give you new ideas on how to improve your layout or the one you will build.

The only thing I can say about the clinic presentations was that they were outstanding. Clinic topics ranged from scratchbuilding cars and buildings, research, and history of railroad locations, scenery, and weather to make the presentation complete. Every clinic helped to motivate me to become a better modeler and strive harder to complete the AP program for Master Modeler Railroader. A friend of mine who just received his MMR presented several clinics on how he achieved several categories. He walked us through the steps that he took, the challenges that he was confronted with and how he overcame them. His presentation was upbeat, he talked about process and the fun he had. He stated that if he can accomplish these goals, so can you. You could not help but get inspired to take on the challenge. I was so motivated that I went into the train show and bought project kits to get started on Car Building. All the MMR's spent time with me and gave tips and techniques to complete my task.

When you think about going to a convention, ask yourself the reasons for attending such an event. Gathering with friends from the past and friends that you will meet is what makes this hobby fun. Passing around knowledge and learning new techniques is going to make you a better modeler. It will encourage you to increase your skill level, produce a better product and in the end, pass this joy of modeling on to others.

- Bob Thiele, Director, Cen-Tex Division 4



Barry Bogs' UP #844 in G Scale



The Banquet Gets Underway



Dr. Robert Holzweiss, Acting Director of the George Bush Presidential Library, speaks about #4141 and the Library



Bill Dryden receives the President's Award

Convention Contest Winners

We had a great contest with 65 total entries. Unfortunately, photos of each winner is not available for publication. Thanks to those who helped in the room or with judging: Casey Akin, Cody Akin, Ray Byer, Ezequiel Duran, Rod Fredericks, Divina Gato-Hogno, Martin Giesecke, Deborah Gifford, Ray Holtzapple, Lourdes McCleary, Jeff Palmer, Scott Parker, Duane Richardson, Kelly Russell, Byron Spampinato, Brenda Stewart, and Don Winn.

Steam Locomotives

1. Barry Bogs - UP 844 Steam Engine in G Scale

Traction & Other Motive Power

1. Lourdes McCleary - Kakima Valley Steeple Cab #298
2. Russell Gifford - Denver & Rio Grande Western Motor Car

Passenger Cars

1. David Crompton - MKT Wooden Express Reefer
2. Robert Ashcraft - Drover Car, Raton & Western RR
3. David Crompton - Passenger Gondola

Freight Cars

1. David Crompton - Tank Car, Oil Delivery Service
2. David Crompton - Wooden Box Car
3. Robert Ashcraft - Flat Car, Raton & Western RR

Maintenance of Way

1. Don Winn - CB&Q #2392 MOW Flat Car
2. Randall Wilson - Houston & East Tx Dynamometer HET #10

Cabooses

1. Robert Ashcraft - KCT Railway Transfer Caboose

On-Line Structures

1. Russell Gifford - South Dakota Train Station
2. Don Winn - Yorkville Depot
3. Russell Gifford - Two Stall Engine House

Off-Line Structures

1. Duane Richardson - Olson's Mezcal Distillery Boiler
2. Jeffrey Nichols - Col. Clinks & Howitzer Cigar & Liquor Shop

Displays/Modules

1. Russell Gifford - Lumber Yard / Tool Repair
2. Jeffrey Nichols - Rusty Gold

Prototype Photographs - B&W Prints

1. Gary Ray - Nighttime in the Roundhouse
2. Brian Kelly - Designing Metal Coupler
3. Gary Ray - Past Glory

Prototype Photographs - Color Prints

1. Gary Ray - Smoke in the Canton
2. Byron Spampinato - Lubrication
3. Robert Ashcraft - Blue Sky on the Transcon

Model Photographs - B&W Prints

1. Geoff Hogno - Logging at Miniature Wonderland
2. Geoff Hogno - Old Freight Depot at Miniature Wonderland
3. Geoff Hogno - Gravel Terminal at Miniature Wonderland

Model Photographs - Color Prints

1. Jeffrey Nichols - Spring Time in Western Nebraska
2. Geoff Hogno - Vorden Baum Mine at Stony Creek & Western
3. Jeffrey Nichols - Opa's Little Engineer

Arts & Crafts General

1. Cynthia Sibitzky - Quilted Purse
2. Norma Brignac - Painting of the Dog

Arts & Crafts Railroadiana

1. Helen Beggane - Chessie the Car Vase
2. Tom Greco - Switch Key Shadow Box

Arts & Crafts Needlework

1. Norma Brignac - Crochet Baby Blanket

Overall Contest Awards

Participation Award

Russell Gifford - 4 entries - 384 points

Most Popular Arts & Crafts Entry

Cynthia Sibitzky - Quilted Purse

Arts & Crafts Best in Show

Cynthia Sibitzky - Quilted Purse

Photography Best in Show

Gary Ray - Nighttime in the Roundhouse

Best Kit-Built Model Award

Jeffrey Nichols - Rusty Gold

Gil Freitag Award for Best Scratch Built Model

Lourdes McCleary - Kakima Valley Steeple Cab #298

Bob Clarke Logging Award

Duane Richardson - Olson's Mezcal Distillery Boiler

Most Popular Model Award

Russell Gifford - South Dakota Train Station

Novice Best in Show Award

Jeffrey Nichols - Rusty Gold

Best in Show Award

Duane Richardson - Olson's Mezcal Distillery Boiler



Russell Gifford wins the Participation Award



Cynthia Sibitzky wins the Most Popular Arts & Crafts and Arts & Crafts Best in Show Awards



Gary Ray wins the Photography Best in Show Award



Russell Gifford wins the Most Popular Model Award



Jeffrey Nichols wins the Novice Best in Show Award



Duane Richardson wins the Best in Show Award

Youth Award Winners

Congratulations to this year's Youth Award Winners!

This year's winners were:

Noah Hunter,
Ramsey Bush,
Danny Joe Gumaer,
and Kavish Nare (not present)



The train show was a hit, too!

Live Steam Railroading - Part 3

by Doug Price

Photos by the Author

As promised in my previous article, "Live Steam Railroading - Part 2," this article provides an overview of the next three outdoor railroads hosting a spring meet for the Southwestern Live Steamers (SWLS). The next stop on the tour is the Comanche & Indian Gap railroad.



For over twenty-five years, April brings the "Spring Fling" at the Comanche & Indian Gap Railroad. In 1995, Peter Bryan convinced Roy Pickard that many smaller scale model railroaders that enjoyed operating meets would be willing to make the trek out to the railroad for several days of operations.

The railroad began in the early 1970's and is widely considered to be the first 1/8 scale railroad specifically designed for operations. It sits on about 35 acres of a 350-acre ranch near the small town of Priddy, TX. The track plan is shown to the right (courtesy of Lingle Engineers).

Note that there are two separate railroads on the track plan map. The blue lines represent the Comanche & Indian Gap (C&IG) RR while the red lines represent the Houston East & West Texas (HEWT) RR, also known as "The Rabbit". The C&IG main line has undergone extensive rebuilding over the past eight years while the HEWT maintains a more "struggling short line" aesthetic.

The C&IG operating sessions typically involve freights trains originating from either Comanche Yard or West Yard. Car cards indicate the town and industry location for spotting each car in a train. When a car is spotted, the conductor places the car card in the back of the card holder at that town location and pulls a card from the front of the holder. The card from the front tells the conductor which car they will pick up from that town.

Two radio dispatchers control the freight traffic movements over the East and West divisions of the railroad,

with the handoff occurring as trains move through Zuni. Passenger trains run on a scheduled timetable and freight train crews must have the mainline clear prior to the scheduled arrival time of a passenger train.

The Spring Fling meets typically last four to five days. It begins with people arriving and unloading equipment at the Indian Gap yard transfer table (Figure 1) and turntable (Figure 2).

While visitors are unloading equipment, the freight cars stored at the railroad are moved out of the Comanche Yard and Indian Gap Yard storage buildings. Many of these freight cars are then staged at industry sidings along the route while others are retained in Comanche Yard or West Yard for building

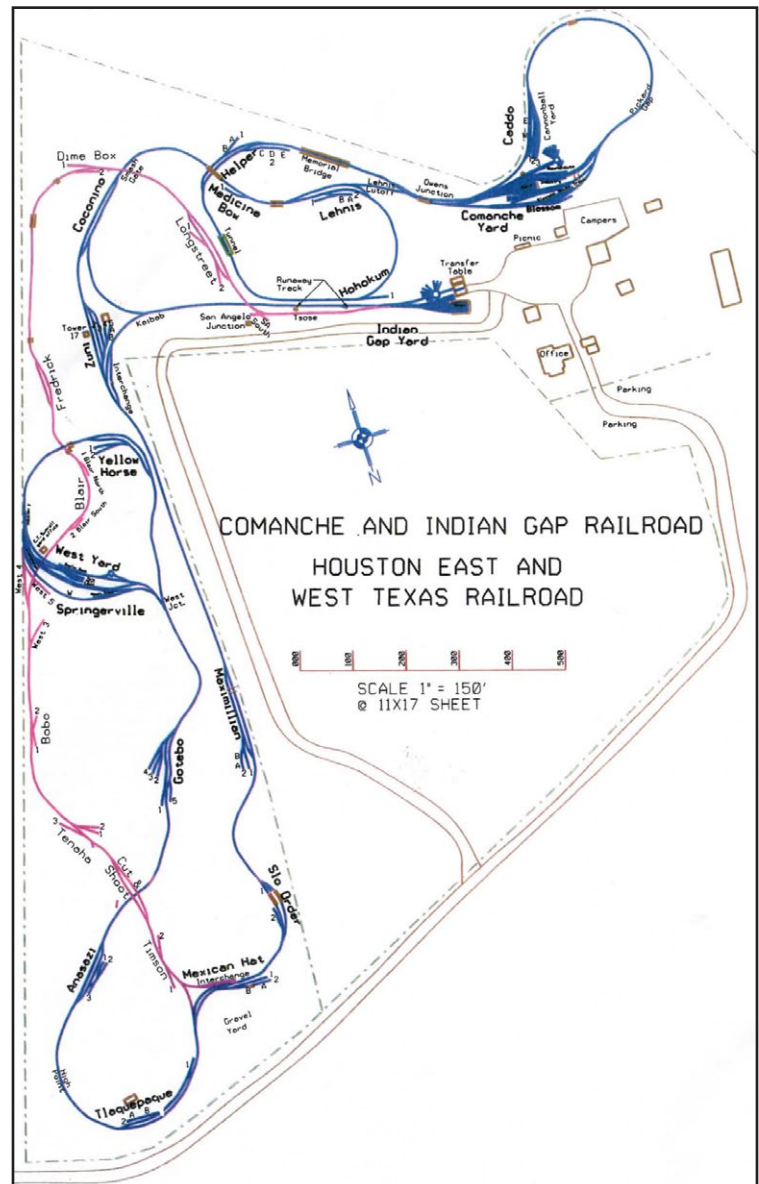




Figure 1: Transfer table

outbound freight trains. A typical operating session involves 80 to 100 freight cars.

Comanche Yard is the primary yard for the railroad. Figure 3 shows the Comanche Yard car barn. The arrival tracks are on the right side of the barn, and the departure tracks and the tracks leading to the diesel bay turntable are on the left.

The yard crew assembles an outbound train of freight cars, typically about five cars, for a road crew to switch. Figure 4 shows Bill Fogg, Richard Day, and Phil Richardson preparing to depart Comanche Yard. They are checking their radios used to communicate with the dispatchers.

After receiving clearance to depart from the Comanche Yardmaster, the conductor contacts the dispatcher by radio and requests permission to proceed. The East End Dispatcher will authorize the train to proceed from the yard to one of the towns on the westbound

route. Figure 5 shows a westbound train approaching the Mississippi Bridge on the way to the town of Helper.

Figure 6 shows one of the crossings where the C&IG RR crosses the HEWT RR. Note the crash swing gate used to block one of the tracks. The C&IG RR traffic typically has priority at the crossings. HEWT traffic must request permission from the dispatcher to cross the C&IG RR.

Figure 7 shows an eastbound passenger train approaching Zuni. You can see the dispatcher's tower in the background, along with a westbound scheduled passenger train, The Super Chief, waiting at the platform.

At Zuni, train control transfers from the East Division dispatcher to the West Division dispatcher or vice versa. The dispatchers also control the operation of the electric turnouts at Zuni. Figure 8 shows

the dispatchers control panel for the turnouts.

After changing from radio channel 7 (for the East Division) to channel 3 (for the West Division) and receiving permission from the dispatcher the train continues westbound. Switching may occur at any of the towns such as Maximilian, Mexican Hat, Tlaquepaque, Anasazi, Gotebo, or Yellowhorse. Between Tlaquepaque and Anasazi, trains pass the survey marker indicating the peak elevation point of the C&IG.

Figure 9 shows a coal-fired steam engine eastbound extra approaching Gotebo. Steven Tacconelly is at the throttle of



*Figure 2:
Turntable and
steaming bays, from
a meet in 2018*

Greg Udolph's engine. Greg Udolph, along with one of his sons, Hudson, are riding behind with Bill Fogg as the conductor.

As the westbound freight ends their run, they approach West Yard where the train will terminate. Passenger trains are routed around West Yard through Springerville. Freight trains will drop the cars they have picked up along the westbound journey and receive a new cut of freight cars for the eastbound return trip.

Depending on the number of trains running - and there have been as many as a dozen freight trains running at once - it takes between an hour to a few hours to make a one-way trip. During open running, a round trip circuit may be completed in 40 minutes to an hour, again depending on traffic.

At the end of the day, many folks sign up for one of the catered dinners at the railroad. Meals are held at the relatively



Figure 3: Comanche Yard Car Barn and Arrival/Departure Tracks

new version of Marilyn's Tea house, named in honor of Marilyn Pickard. This is a great opportunity to catch up with old friends, maybe meet some new folks, as well as rehashing the successes and failures of the day. Figure 10 shows a crowd enjoying dinner at the end of the day.



Figure 4: Bill Fogg, Richard Day, and Phil Richardson preparing to depart Comanche Yard

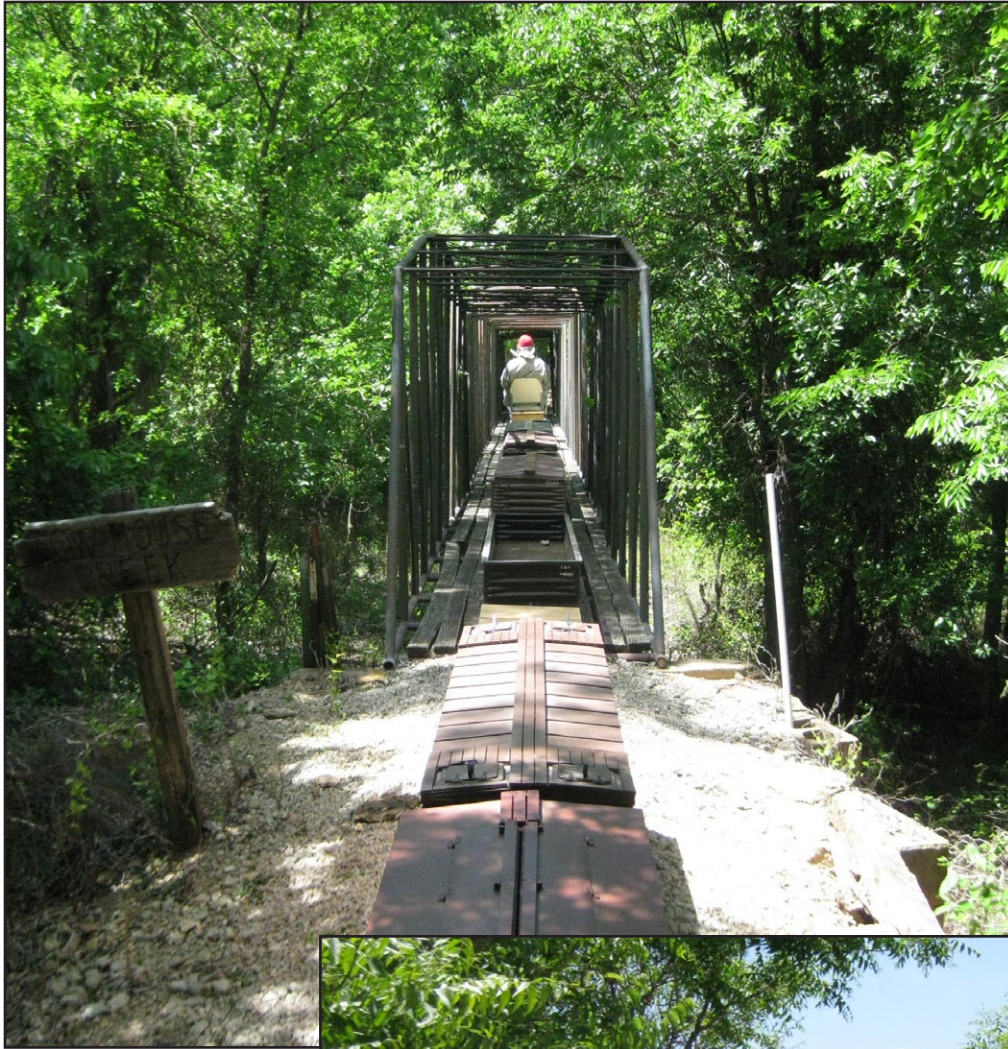


Figure 5:
Westbound train approaching
the Mississippi Bridge



Figure 6:
Westbound C&IG train
crossing the HEWTRR
just east of Coconino



Figure 7:
Eastbound approaching Zuni
with dispatcher's tower in the
background



Figure 8:
Dispatcher's panel for controlling
electric turnouts at Zuni



Figure 9: Eastbound coal-fired steamer approaching Gotebo

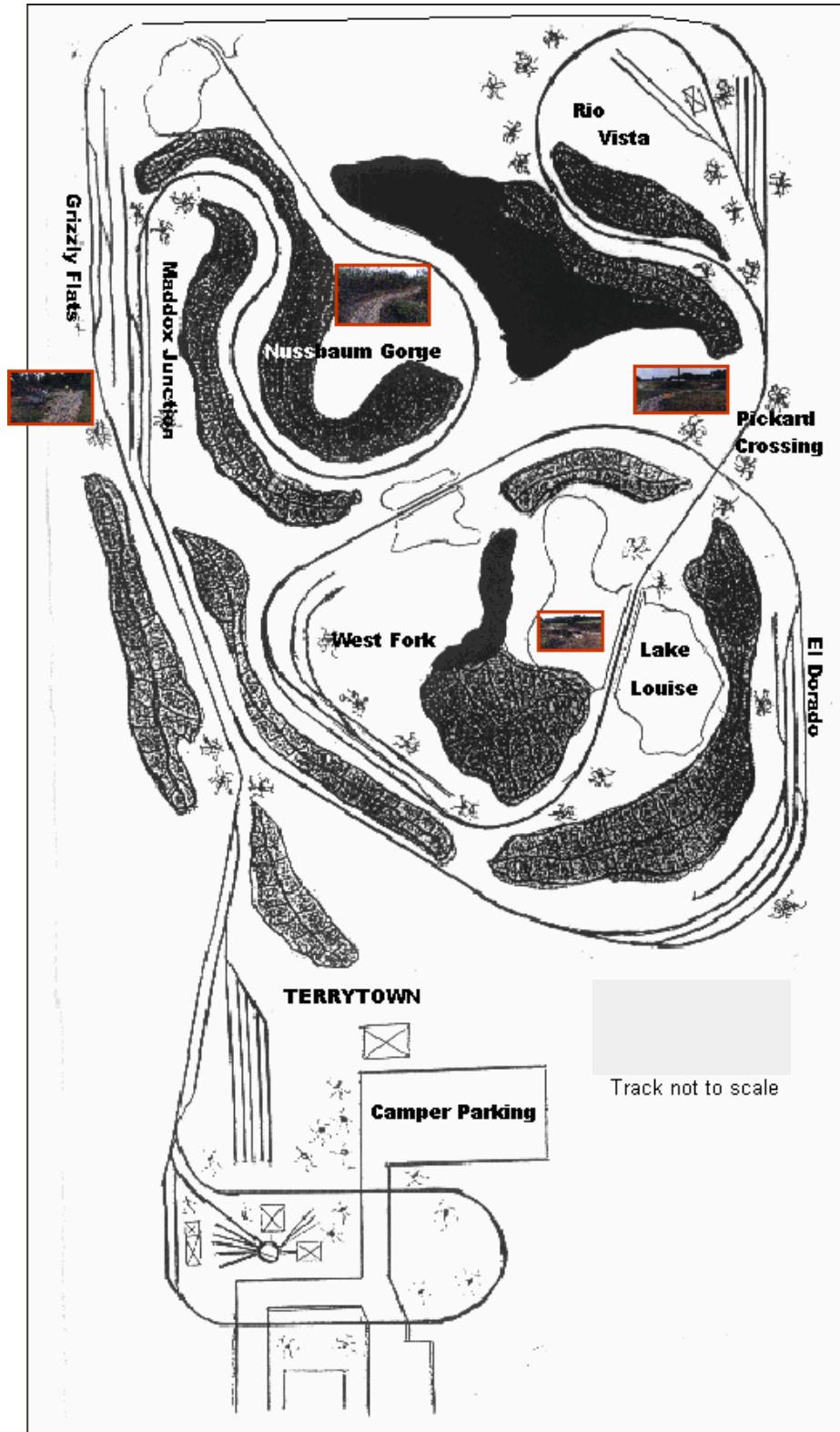


Figure 10: Dinner at Marilyn's Tea House

Next stop is at the Annetta Valley & Western railroad located west of Fort Worth, Texas.

The Annetta Valley and Western Railroad has also been operating for over fifty years. Terry McGrath purchased some property west of Fort Worth and began building the railroad in 1972. The track plan is below.

Figure 11 shows the transfer table used for unloading and moving equipment between steaming bays. Figure 12 shows the turntable and some additional steaming bays. Diesel bays generally have electrical power outlets for recharging batteries, but do not have water and compressed air



facilities typical of steaming bays.

Figures 13 through 16 show some of the variety of steam engines operating at the 2023 spring meet.

Terrytown is where the passenger depot sits and has three main tracks for loading and unloading passengers, as seen in Figure 17.

But meets are more than just places to park trains. Folks were out running throughout the day. Figure 18 shows two trains meeting at El Dorado and figure 19 shows a diesel-powered train returning to Terrytown.

There are a few man-made scenic features that enhance the railroad. An example of this is Lake Louise which required a substantial bridge to cross it, as seen in Figure 20.

Signals are used in a few spots on the railroad. As shown in Figure 21, it is important to approach Pickard Crossing with caution and obey the signals.



Figure 11: Transfer table on the AV&W RR



Figure 12: Turntable and steaming bays



Figures 13-16: Steam locomotives on the railroad

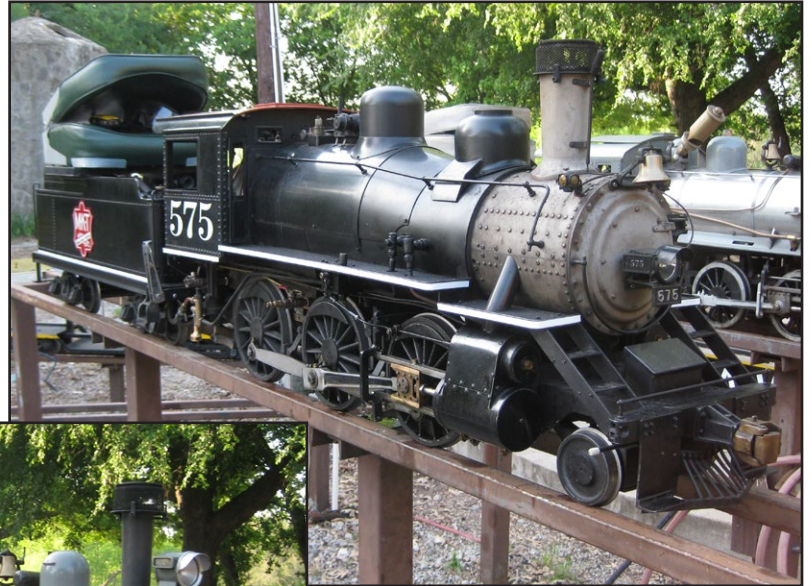




Figure 17:
Terrytown passenger platforms



Figure 18:
Trains passing at El Dorado



Figure 19:
Diesel returning
to Terrytown
after running the
railroad



Figure 20:
The J. Beverung
bridge over
Lake Louise



Figure 21: Trains meet at Pickard Crossing

Last stop for this article is the Big Creek and Southern Railroad located southeast of Kansas City, Missouri.



Pat McCarthy started the Big Creek & Southern Railroad in 1995. It occupies over 13 acres of rolling terrain. The regular work crew does a fantastic job of maintaining this large railroad. The track plan is shown below, courtesy of Glen Tebo. The first part of the week we ran car card operations on

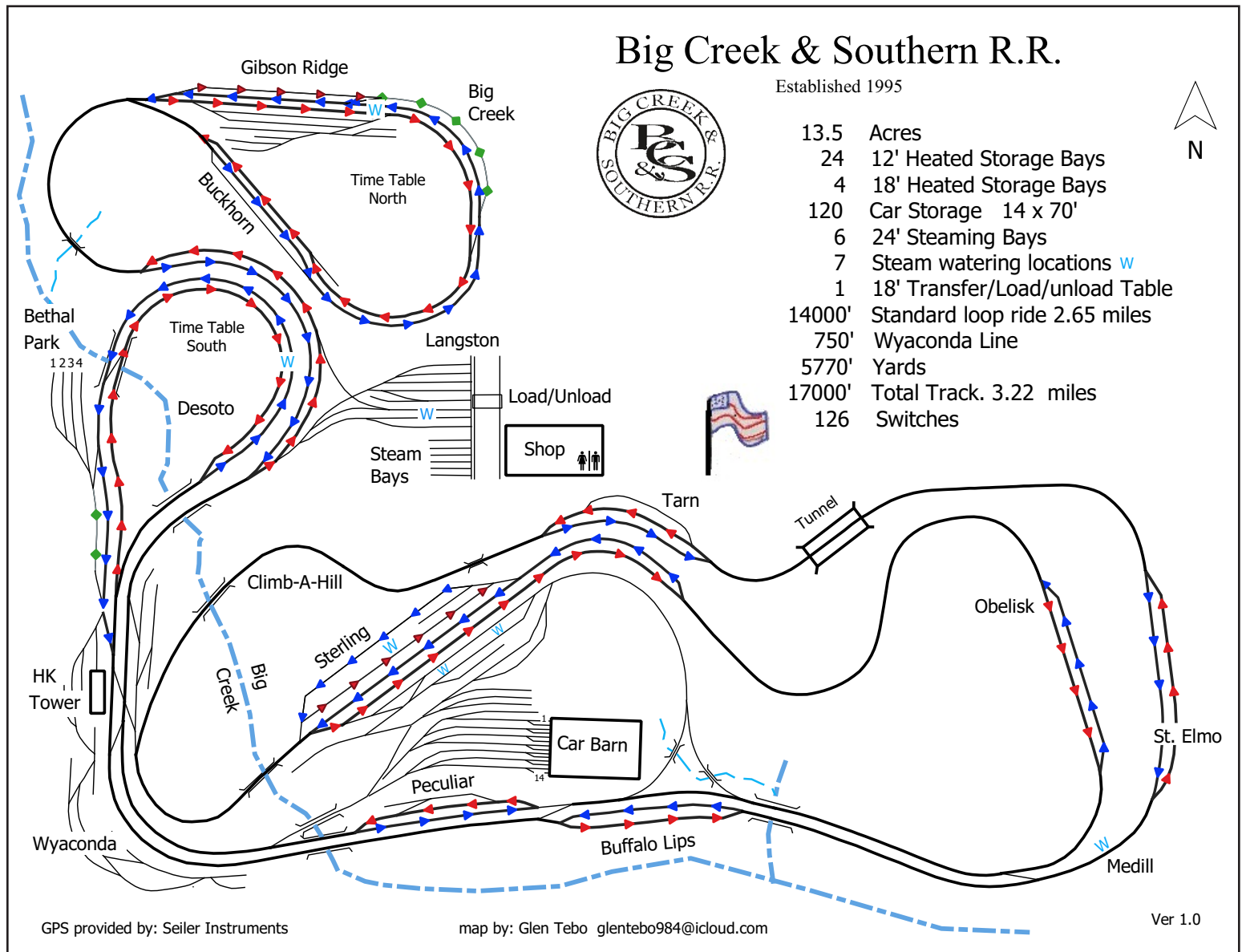
the railroad and used radio dispatching instead of the signal system. The signal system is designed for open running in specific directions and would not have worked as well for the operating session. The latter part of the week was open running with several more visiting trains in operation.

The unloading area is next to the shop. The transfer table allows unloading into steaming bays or Langston Yard. Figures 22 and 23 show overviews of the unloading area.

Figure 24 shows a nice view of the northern portion of the railroad. With the grass and landscaping, the railroad has a park-like appearance.

The track plan provides a lot of mainline track in a relatively small area. As a result, there are places that appear to be double-track or triple-track mainline but are actually separate routes running parallel. Figure 25 illustrates this with three different trains running on three different mainlines near Wyconda.

Figure 26 shows how the three different mainlines can connect to each other if needed. This is a view through signal bridge number 3.



There are two other large yards besides Langston (near the unloading area). Sterling Yard has several through mainline tracks and some parking tracks. Figure 27 shows the yard in front of the car barn. The car barn yard is a stub end yard but connects to Sterling Yard with a switchback.

There were at least seven live steam locomotives operating during the meet. Unfortunately, there are only six steaming bays, so some bays were loaded up with two engines. Figure 28 shows two steamers sharing a bay, Nickel Plate Road 384 (an 0-6-0) and Nickel Plate Road 165 (a 4-6-0).

There were plenty of diesel and electric engines too. Figure 29 shows a steeple cab electric model along with a few other diesel models in the background. Fortunately, the overhead catenary wires for the steeple cab were not modeled.

Pat McCarthy's large northern (a 4-8-2) steam engine was also in service. Some of the regular BC&S RR crew brought it out to run a few laps. Figure 30 shows it passing Langston and about to tackle the hill up to Gibson Ridge.

In conclusion, I visited five railroads in the spring of 2023, including the three covered in this article. There are more railroads on the schedule for the fall and each will be covered in future articles.

Visiting one of the meets is a great way to see and learn more about this aspect of model railroading. SWLS meets are for members and invited guests. If you would like to attend an SWLS meet, please contact the Secretary/Treasurer at secretary@southwesternlivesteamers.org and ask for an invitation. You can also learn more or obtain a membership application from the SWLS website: <https://www.southwesternlivesteamers.org>. **ML**



Figure 22: Transfer table pit between the shop and Langston



Figure 23: Unloading area and view of Langston



Figure 24: View north from HK Tower



Figure 25: Three trains on three different mainlines



Figure 26: View of three different mainlines through signal bridge #3



Figure 27: Car Barn Yard



Figure 28:
Engines 384 and 165
share a steaming bay



Figure 29:
Steeple cab electric and
several diesel models



Figure 30: Pat McCarthy's Northern in action



Model Railroading in Small Spaces

With Smoke and Mirrors, You Can Work Magic Into Your Small Layout

by Cliff Scherer



Figure 1: Panorama view of Steve Jackobs' Austin & Taylor & Pacific

Let's turn a small layout area into something almost magical in its realism. This quarter's Getting Started Column features a readers' digest of Steve Jackobs excellent article, "Model Railroading in Small Spaces" from *Railroad Model Craftsman*, July 2022. Steve's layout, the Austin & Taylor & Pacific (featured on the front and back cover of this issue), provides a high level of realism and operating enjoyment in a space at one end of a small room. As shown in Figure 2, It takes up just 10' along the back and has 2 legs extending 5' from the back wall at each side wall. The layout feels much larger than it is due to some of the tricks and techniques used to create various optical illusions. None of these are particularly difficult – they could be easily implemented by some of us less experienced. Read on to see how Steve makes a small space seem big.

In achieving so much in such a small space we need to first define some parameters that will make a small layout work:

Track Plan

Most of us start with a small layout that goes round and round in an oval or some other pattern. This is great except that the oval takes up a lot of room and for some of us it gets boring watching trains go in circles. One key to Steve's layout is that it goes from point to point and trains are run from specific locations to other locations with a

purpose. This is "operations" in model railroading and adds considerably to enjoyment, especially on a small layout. We'll touch on operations later in this column.

Sector Plates

Notice how the track plan (Figure 3) flows from Austin to Taylor and back with industries in between. But there is an added feature that helps Steve achieve his goals: Sector Plates. A Sector Plate is essentially a flat removable track surface

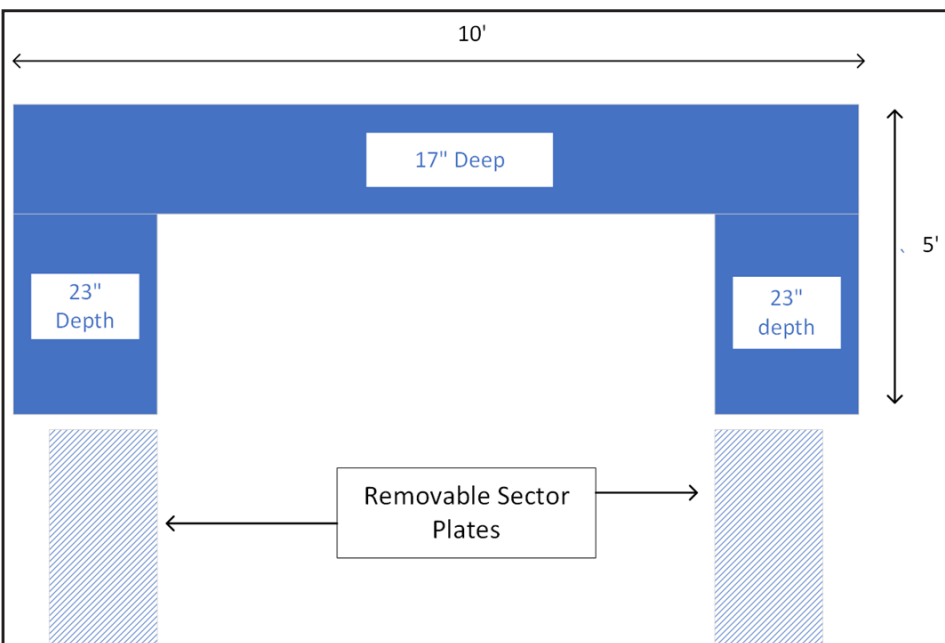


Figure 2: The Austin & Taylor & Pacific space plan (not to scale)

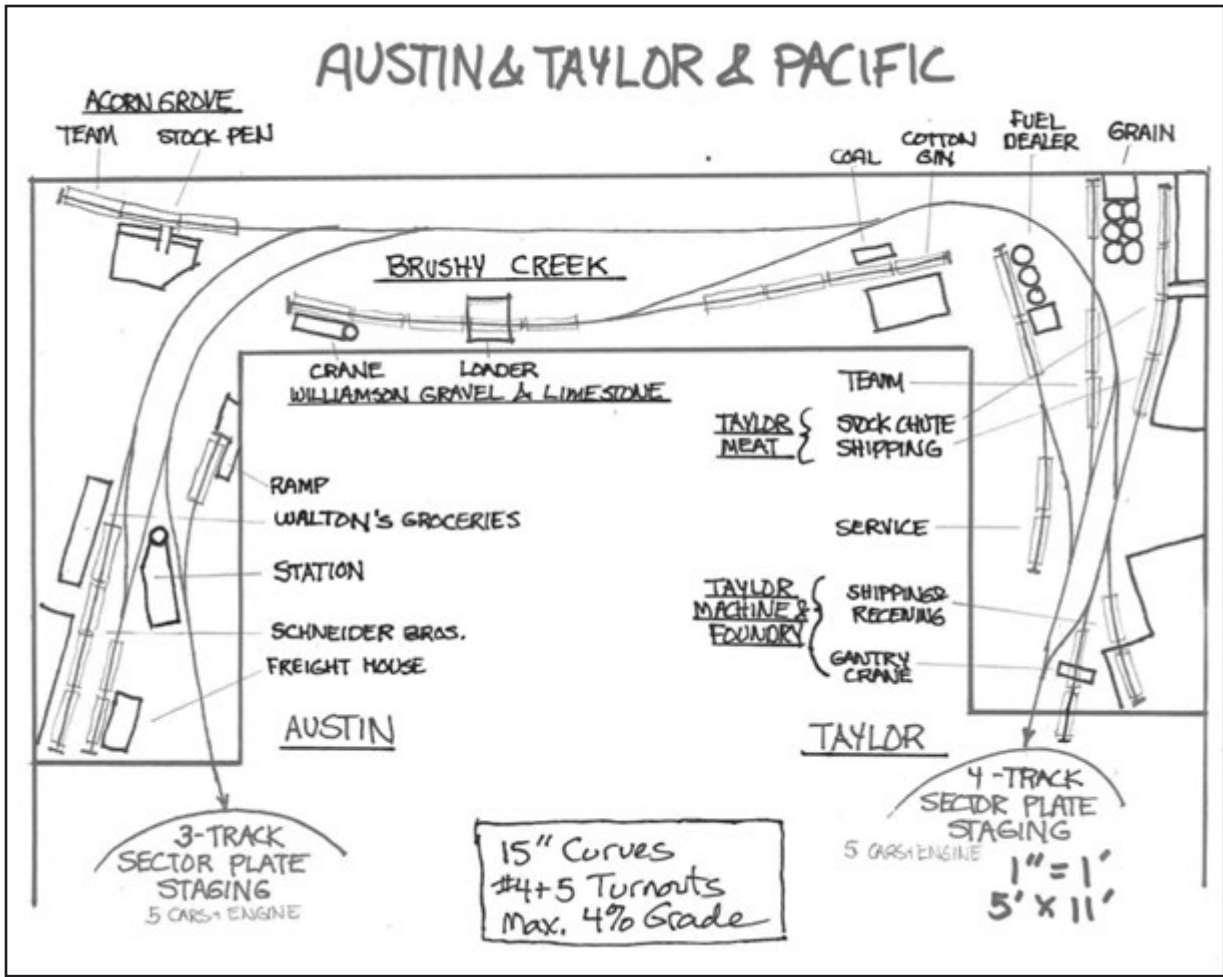


Figure 3: The Austin & Taylor & Pacific track plan

that contains one or more tracks. These tracks join a track that runs to the edge of the layout. The sector plate provides much more operating flexibility on a small layout because these plates provide a place to originate and terminate trains. They are removable and easily storable, so they have minimal impact on layout size. Essentially, they are like off-layout yards.

Scenes with Layers

The track plan with sector plates helps make this small layout fun, but more is needed to give the illusion of a much larger layout. Many of us are familiar with the use of scenes in our layouts. A scene is nothing more



Figure 4: The Austin City Scene

than a specific area of visual interest on the layout. The idea is to focus the viewer's mind on a specific place rather than the whole layout at once. Steve takes the concept of scenes and adds layers to give the illusion of a scene that is much deeper than it is.

Let's follow a pictorial demonstration of how layers work to achieve the illusion of depth and create a focus point for the eye.

In Figure 4, we see the Austin City Scene containing three layers to give a feeling of depth. Note the use of lighting in some buildings, which draws the eye to details. These detailed scenes cause the viewer to focus on the scene rather than taking in the layout as a whole, which re-enforces the feeling of larger size.

Here are the three layers dissected:



This is the background layer. It consists of "flats" placed against the backdrop. Building flats can be purchased pre-assembled or easily built from scratch.

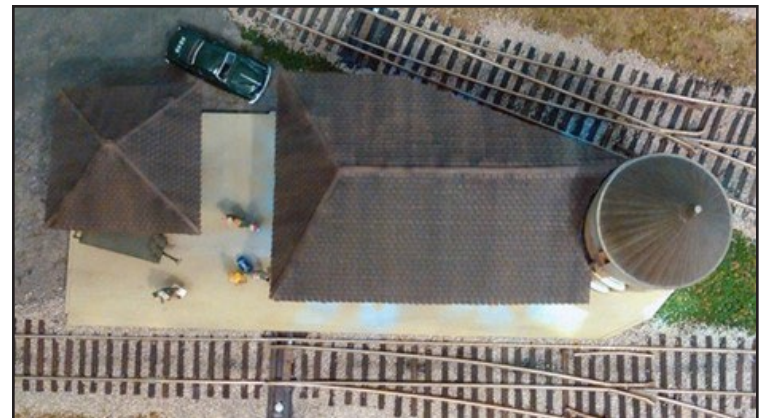


Here is the second layer, consisting of the Grocery Warehouse (Frozen Foods) building on the right and the Wholesale Distributor on the left. Behind these are the flats in the background layer. Note the angled corner of the Grocery Warehouse. When viewing the layout, this corner makes the street appear wider in front of the flats.



This is one of the buildings in the front layer. You can clearly see the three layers here: the depot in front, the Grocery (Frozen Food) Warehouse in the middle and the flats against the backdrop.

Now let's have a look at what makes these buildings unique in their specific locations.



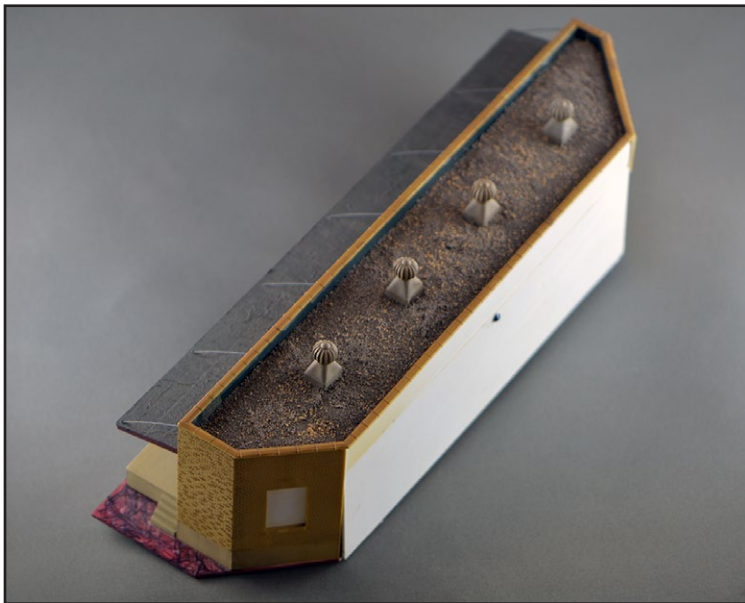
As you can see in this top view, the back of the depot building is actually sliced off to accommodate the siding running behind it. Because Steve lighted and detailed the depot interior and because the layout is 54" high, the viewer does not see that the depot is not complete on its backside.



On the bottom of the previous page is the back of the depot. The sliced off section allows a section of track to run where there wouldn't be room otherwise. And the viewer is none the wiser.



The Grocery (Frozen Food) Warehouse as seen from the front of the layout.



This is the Grocery (Frozen Food) Warehouse seen from above and behind. The corners are angled at the back to make the street running between the back of the warehouse the building flats appear to be much wider. Again, the eye is tricked into seeing more depth than is actually there.

Scene Transitions

Moving from scene layering to scene transition, Steve has done an excellent job of making scene transitions believable in a compressed space. In the prototype world, a city typically transitions to the country over

several miles in many cases. Buildings tend to get smaller and gradually things become more rural. Steve has done the same thing on a smaller scale.



In this area of the layout, the city begins to transition to the country with fewer buildings to the right. The building that is there is light industrial and behind it is another building with a metal roof giving a more rural appearance.



The edge of the country with the edge of the city buildings on the left and purely rural structures to the right.

As we move further out of town, we enter the countryside with a cattle operation on the left, a quarry in the middle and more open ground on the right. A country water stop is on the main line for thirsty steam engines. Also, note the curved horizon formed by the trees on the backdrop. This gives the illusion of the earth's curvature further enhancing the



impression of greater distance.

Trees and Foliage

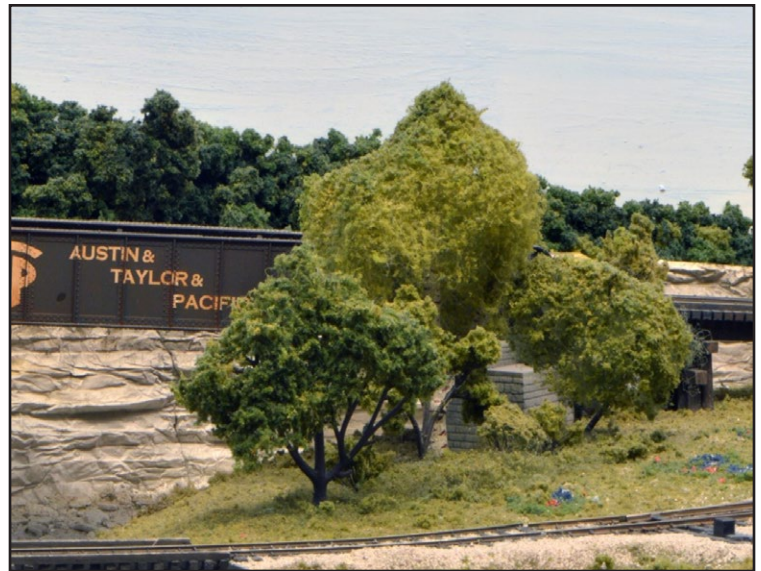
Out in the country there is more foliage on Steve's layout, and he uses this to advantage, creating layers with depth. The following images show some of the techniques.



This is part of the background layer in the country. Here, the foliage is dense and heavily textured to give the impression of thick undergrowth as might be seen in the country along the tracks.



Here is another area of the country background layer where there is less room for thick texture in the foliage. Steve has created zero relief trees here that work like building flats in the city scene.



The second layer in the country is formed by free-standing trees. These appear three dimensional, but they aren't as we'll see next.



Steve's second layer trees are shallow relief, meaning they are three dimensional facing the front of the layout, but conserve space by not filling out their backsides. Here is a side view of one of these trees. The viewer sees the tree from the left of this image.

Smoke and Mirrors

Now for the smoke and mirrors on Steve's layout. As if some of the previous techniques weren't magical enough, Steve has doubled the size of Taylor without physically taking



up any extra space. To do this, Steve used a carefully concealed mirror in the corner. Let's see how this was done.

The mirror is in the corner at the town of Taylor. In this view, the mirror is on the back wall. Its left edge is concealed by the smokestack and rising smoke. Its right edge is concealed by the flagpole which is at the corner of the layout. The top edge is hidden by the horizontal cloud bank. The grain elevator's size is effectively doubled by its mirror image and the illusion is enhanced by the grain chute placed strategically against the mirror. The buildings behind the grain elevator are the mirror images of the buildings seen to the far right. Note that the mirror Steve used is a front surface mirror. This mirror has the coating on the front surface instead of the back of the mirror. If a common mirror like a bathroom mirror is used, the viewer would see the double image created at the edges.

Details

Earlier we discussed how details call the viewers' attention away from the overall layout and toward interesting mini-scenes. Steve calls these mini-scenes vignettes and they play an important role in creating a convincing layout in such a small space. Let's look at a couple of these.



Welders working on a truck frame in the foreground layer.



Railroad men engaged in a game of checkers. There are 5 checker games sprinkled throughout the layout and it's quite a challenge to find them all. Adding detail to a layout can be a lot of fun and a great way to give a little personality to the layout.

Motive Power and Rolling Stock

In order to have more fun, more realism, and more flexibility in a small space, Steve carefully selects the locomotives and rolling stock so as not to overpower the layout with equipment that is too large. Generally, switchers and 40' cars are the norm. For added realism the locomotives are equipped with sound and controlled by DCC with programming including realistic momentum and braking.

The Austin & Taylor & Pacific motive power includes smaller diesels and steam engines that look more realistic and perform better on a small layout. Steve can change the era of the layout simply by changing the type of motive power and rail cars for a given operating session.

Just like with motive power, Steve can change eras by running newer or older cars in a specific operating session. Regardless of era, the cars Steve selects are generally 40' to match the smaller layout size.



Operations

The final key to so much in such a small space is operations. The concepts of operations on a model railroad are a bit beyond this article – we’ll cover operations in a future installment of Getting Started in Model Railroading. But let’s get a taste of how Steve has worked operations into his layout.

Here is the A&T&P timetable for an operating session. Simplified car cards and waybills are used to give operators their instructions for making up trains, switching, and moving trains across the layout. Even on this small layout, Steve has scheduled trains in such a way that 4 operators can participate comfortably in a session.

These operating sessions are the real culmination and fun in this highly detailed, very realistic layout. With some optical illusion, a little smoke and mirrors, and great detailing, Steve has made model railroading in a small space a fun, realistic reality.

ML

| Austin & Taylor & Pacific Employee Timetable Effective 4-22-17 | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|----------|-------------|--------------|----------|--------------------------|
| | Austin Interchng | West Sub | | East Sub | | Taylor Interchng/Storage |
| | | Austin | Acorn Grove | Brushy Creek | Taylor | |
| 0600 | | | | Stock | Run | |
| 0630 | | | | | | |
| 0700 | | | | | | |
| 0730 | | | | | | |
| 0800 | | | | | | |
| 0830 | | staging | | | staging | |
| 0900 | | | | WestBound | Hot | Shot |
| 0930 | | delivery | | | delivery | |
| 1000 | | | | | | |
| 1030 | | Taylor | Turn | | | |
| 1100 | | | | | | |
| 1130 | | | | | | |
| 1200 | | | | Ice | Run | |
| 1230 | | | | | | |
| 1300 | | | | | | |
| 1330 | | | | | | |
| 1400 | | Brushy | Creek | Turn | | |
| 1430 | | | | | | |
| 1500 | | | | | delivery | |
| 1530 | | | | Taylor | Gravel | Run |
| 1600 | | | | | | |
| 1630 | | Austin | Gravel | Run | | |
| 1700 | | | | | | |
| 1730 | | | | | | |
| 1800 | | staging | | | staging | |
| 1830 | EastBound | Hot | Shot | | | |
| 1900 | | delivery | | | delivery | |
| 1930 | | | | | | |
| 2000 | | | | | | |
| 2030 | | | | | | |

= Taylor-based crew and engine

= Austin-based crew and engine

= Hot Shot crew and engine

= yard work by home crew as opportune

= Origin

= In Transit Drop/Pickup

= End

= Potential Drop/Pickup

MARCH 2024 | ML 51



The Houston Society of Model Engineers

by Bob Barnett, MMR and Art Borman

The Houston Society of Model Engineers was a fixture on the model railroad scene around Houston for many years. The following is reproduced from an article in the Third Quarter 1965 *Marker Lamp* (Volume 11, Issue 3). It is one of the earliest published articles on the club and its layout. The author is unclear but most, if not all, of the information was contributed by John Bamberg, one of the club founders:

Newly organized in Houston, a growing organization has obtained space in the Union Station in downtown Houston for headquarters and a huge layout. Open during the convention, but not on the bus tour, the club was host to many of the convention members.

Under the direction of John Bamberg, 8330 McAvoy in Houston, much has already been accomplished towards making this one of the outstanding layouts in the Houston area.

The room is large, with 1300 square feet, with some bench work completed and track in place. Operation is point to point with provision for continuous running. Heavy freight and passenger traffic is planned, way freight switching and timetable operation to come in the future. There will be two branch lines, one probably narrow gauge.

Bamberg feels that a club layout serves a number of useful purposes (1) a much larger layout than anyone could build alone, (2) each member adds his talents to the many varied abilities of the others, all being necessary to the layout as a whole, (3) enough members to operate in a prototypical manner and (4) all of this without any cost except monthly dues since a member need not own any railroad equipment. The club fills a need for those who do not or cannot build a layout of their own. It provides a place to run big equipment and long trains which should be rewarding in pleasure both to operate and watch.

The club dues are \$5.00 a month, which may seem high to some, but the club is able to afford expansion and development with the hope that someday they may own their own quarters. Management is by an elected board with members voting on a seniority system set up to maintain interest, maintain continuity of program and promote the club's future. John points out that the club already has a well-established policy of welcoming visitors,

and extends an invitation to all.

The Houston Society of Model Engineers is well on the way. We wish them best of luck.

Well the club *was* successful and survived until around 2020. For many years the HSME layout in Union Station was on the San Jac's November Layout Tour. I recall parking in the observation aisle near the throat of their Union Station and watching a parade of passenger trains come and go. Because most of the rolling stock was owned by the individual members you got to see a variety of roads with long steam and diesel powered passenger and freight trains. Member Marty Null typically had some heavy Union Pacific power in the railroad and Norman Eubanks, a big Katy Fan always had a Katy heavyweight train pulled by the Hallmark H3a Pacific running. MoPac fan Ron Merrick usually had some detailed MoPac power and trains as well as a couple of Santa Fe fans would be running their heavy steam or F-Unit las-ups. It was a smorgasbord of accurately modeled freight and passenger trains. In the late 1970's and early 1980's the HSME layout was one of the premier large layouts in Houston.

At a recent long lunch Art Borman, a past president of the HSME, gave additional history of the club and layout. Art as president in the late 1970'S and he still has some of the annual membership rosters. Art was living out of town in the early 1980's when the ax fell and the HSM lost their home on the third floor of Union Station. The club was able to find a new home south of town in Manvel on land owned by Ben Harris' family. The HSME remained at this location until recently. Redevelopment in the area consumed the family farm and the HSME headquarters building. More will be written later about the HSME's new home and railroad in Manvel.

During the period of relocation in the 1980's several well-known modelers left the club. But the silver lining to this loss was many built their own home layouts:

- Mike Spoor's CB&Q Chicago Division
- Bob Dannenbrink's Diablo Valley Lines
- Lynne Zimmerman's Western Maryland
- Art Borman's C&O Layout
- Bill Wright's Layout were all built by former HSME members

- Long-time member Ben Harris also built his railroad only a few hundred feet from the HSME's new home
- Jay Miller, well-known Dallas area Santa Fe Modeler was an HSME member and Co-authored the 1979 MR Article with Bob Dannenbrink. Jay also did the photo shoot for that article. Jay moved to the DFW area and built a popular Santa Fe layout. He has since moved to Central Texas and models large scale narrow gauge.

The HSME is gone but not forgotten. The club managed to survive for over 50 years and built layouts in two locations. Several of its active members built their own home layouts and were later active in San Jacinto Club or Division 8.

*Author's note: After talking with numerous Houston area model railroaders we have been unable to locate any photos or slides of the HSME layout other than the photos that were published in the 1979 Model Railroader article. If any LSR members have photos of the HSME layout please contact LSR Historian Bob Barnett. We would love to include them in the LSR historic layouts files. Bob can be reached at (281) 615-9683 and rbarnettmopac@gmail.com. **ML***



Photo by Jay Miller as published in September 1979 Model Railroader. Pictured in foreground are Ron Merrick on left and Bob Dannenbrink on the right. The HSME member in the back sporting a beard is possibly Jay Miller. Katy modeler Norman Eubanks is in the background just right of the column.

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Board of Directors Meeting Notes

MINUTES OF THE LONE STAR REGION BOARD MEETING Houston, Texas – January 28, 2024

President Donna Orr called the Annual Board meeting to order at 2:03 PM.

Roll call

All of the officers, directors and committee chairpersons were present except:

Voting Board Members:

Michael Harang – Proxy: Jeff Palmer

Phil Stewart – Proxy: Chuck Lind

Don Kimmell – Proxy: Jeff Palmer

Non-voting Board Members:

Ken Kaiser

Visitors

Roy Kaiser

Motion 1: Minutes of Previous Meeting

Secretary Jeff Palmer provided a motion and **Chuck Lind** seconded to dispense with the reading of the minutes and approve, as published the Minutes of the June 4, 2023 Semi-Annual Board of Directors meeting published online. The motion passed.

Officers Reports

President Donna Orr

Happy New Year everyone. I hope that your holidays were great and this year is a better one for everyone.

Thinking about what to write in this report that would be interesting to all. I decided to look back to what other LSR Presidents wrote. And what I found out was very interesting. Every President had similar or the same challenges. The region has been trying to get youth involved in the NMRA for years. We've been looking at ways to increase membership. How to get more members to volunteer their time. What to do to make our regional conventions more interesting and attract more members. Then on the current Regional Presidents Call, I learned that

another region has set up a procedure for retaining rail pass members. The statistics are that only 9 out of every 100 rail passes convert to full memberships. This action plan will be discussed by our LSR Board of Directors to see if there is something similar that our region may do. On another note, our NMRA President Gordy Robinson mentioned that the NMRA membership grew this past year for the first time since 1992.

Conventions are always a subject of interest. Our 2024 regional convention is "Where the Eagle meets the Chief." Hope to see all of you there, in Pasadena, Texas, February 15-17, 2024. You can go to www.turbotrains.com/2024lonestar for more information.

Have you ever thought about what happened to passenger trains in the US? With a busy transcontinental network of 254,000 miles of tracks at its height a little over a century ago, America moved on trains. In the 1860's we had the first transcontinental railroad. And by the 1900s, almost every American lived within easy access to a train station. Then what happened? One thing: our nation changed their focus to smaller fancier transportation – the car. Many miles of track were then turned over to the freight industry. Also, attention was given to an interstate Highway system, justified as a national defense program. Highways could be used for evacuation and to transport troops. Money was poured into the modernizing of the passenger network right at the wrong time. But then in 1970 Amtrak was born. Things are not great with Amtrak, since 70% of the tracks it runs on are owned and shared with private freight companies, which gives little control over scheduling delays and maintenance. But Amtrak is what we have for passenger transportation. Will they be able to convince Americans to hop on a train rather than taking a car between major cities? Just a thought.

Another thought - next year is the 90th anniversary of the NMRA.

Vice-President Ray Byer

Hello to all who is reading this report. To all who may not know who I am or who is new to the LSR, my name is Ray Byer. I am the current Vice President of the LSR, I have been VP for two terms and running for re-election again. I also Co-Chair the LSR contest room and judging

and am the LSR Parliamentarian. I have been in the hobby for over 30 years and part of the NMRA for 25 years. I model all scales (a so call Rubber Gauger) but I like logging and light industry railroads. In March of this year the LSR will be holding elections again, so I am asking for your vote. Thank you for your support in the past and I look forward to helping you and the LSR in the future.

And now for the VP report. As you all know, the LSR holds an annual Convention each year. I have been contacted by members asking why do we have them? And I tell them how they can learn new skills and ideas on modeling, history, fellowship, and have a contest so you can have an item judged so you can work towards becoming a Master Model Railroader. Then they ask, "Why does it cost so much?" and I go into the cost in hosting the event, cost of the event center, the dinner, and the awards. Then sometimes they ask, "Why do y'all pick times in the middle of a school year or graduations?" and I try to explain that the date of a convention is set by the host who is putting on the convention. So after answering their questions, you have to think, "Why do we have a convention?"

"Why do we have a convention?" is a good question. As some of you know the convention is one of the biggest costs that the LSR has each year, and if you have attended in the past you can see the attention is dropping. Is this due to the age of the membership who likes coming each year to see old friends (I do) or is it not advertised or promoted through the web or in print across the LSR Region? It comes a time where you (LSR) must ask if it's the worth the cost and time.

This is a question I am asking you the membership of the LSR, "Why do we have conventions and do we keep having them each year". So, stop think and write down things you like about going to the LSR convention and then write things you do not like about going to the LSR convention and how they can be fixed. When you have your list of pros and cons send them to me at raybyer@yahoo.com. I will report back to you with a report on the outcome of this question and also it will tell me if you read this report and for me to keep fighting to have annual convention.

Secretary Jeff Palmer

This will be my last report as the LSR Secretary and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of you for the privilege I've had to work with each of you. I have always told everyone and specifically each LSR President that "if there was anyone, they wanted in this position, I would be happy to step aside and let them have it." In keeping with that statement, Peter Kazmir has stepped up. He should run uncontested but no matter what, I will be working with all LSR Secretary candidates to transfer those responsibilities.

Currently the secretary is trying to help the future secretary to pull together the various reports from the other LSR Officers and Chairs in preparation of the February BOD meeting. The cooperation of the officers and chairs is greatly appreciated.

One last note, please remember in your reporting that education is our prime directive and to highlight it where possible in your reporting.

Treasurer Steve Sandifer

Even though you elected me in May, and I was later added to the bank account, it was only in December that my signature was finally approved for our account. Donna and I have made numerous trips to the bank, filled out forms, shown minutes of board meetings, etc. in attempts to get things straight. It took a phone call to corporate to finally complete things, we think.

With that out of the way, I will be following up with Marker Lamp advertisers to ensure that they are up-to-date with payments and will be looking at secure ways to earn interest on our funds. It seems poor stewardship to have \$44,000 doing nothing.

Division 8 has not requested any seed money for the February convention nor have the accounts been finalized for the national convention. I hope you plan on coming to Houston in February. I will be hosting an operating session and presenting a clinic in addition to chairing the train show. Tables for the train show have been sold out for months and include a number of estates where there will be bargains galore.

[Treasurer Report as given is included in the following section. -Ed.]

Advisor Chuck Lind

Several topics have been discussed with the President and I have given my input on them based on past history.

Director and Department Reports

[Director and Department Reports as given are included in the following section. -Ed.]

Old Business

It needs to be noted that the first two items under New Business were originally slated to appear here. After a Point of Order request, the items were moved to New Business. After the BOD meeting, it was determined that the items in question did indeed belong in Old Business.

New Business

Peter Kazmir opened new business describing the new email service – Moosend. The new service requires a \$150/year expenditure.

Peter Kazmir reassured the BOD that the Marker Lamp publication was back on track after a year turmoil in which only 2 of the quarterly magazines were published.

Chuck Lind discussed the damage done by the lack of the Marker Lamp publication to the 2024 LSR Convention being held in Houston. Not to mention the damage done to the LSR with the failure to publish the minutes from the June 2023 BOD meeting. Chuck went on to describe the problem of trying to get the convention advertisement email out.

Chuck Lind presented 4 Youth Award candidates – **Kavish Nave** from Division 4, **Danny Joe Gumaer** from Division 5, **Noah Hunter** from Division 6, and **Ramsey Bush** from Division 6. Since Noah and Ramsey were both from Division 6, Noah Hunter was presented as the Division 6 candidate and Ramsey Bush was presented as the BOD candidate. Chuck made the **motion** to accept the candidates as the LSR Youth Award winners. Don Winn 2nd the motion and the motion passed.

Divina Gato-Hogno presented the idea of creating a Young Professional Award. The basic issue is college students and young adults starting their post college career life. Many of these young adults lack the funds necessary to afford NMRA membership. Blake Bogs was cited as an example of college student and newlywed professional. It was pointed out that if we are going to recruit younger member, the NMRA/LSR needs to reach into the colleges and identify opportunities to involve the young adults into Model Railroading. A **committee** was formed, Divina Gato-Hogno, Peter Kazmir, and Bob Thiele, to investigate this avenue and report back to the board.

Chuck Lind and **Donna Orr** presented the topic “Excess Funds for Special Events at Regional Conventions”. The basic idea is to allow LSR unsecured funds over \$40K with a \$2K cap to be used for a special event at a regional convention. After some lengthy discussion, a motion was presented for an LSR regional convention to be able to request funds used for a special event sponsored by the LSR at the regional convention with board approval. The amount is limited to \$2k and can be requested if the unsecured LSR funds are over \$40K. The **motion** was made by Chuck Lind and seconded by Pete Leach. The motion passed.

Donna Orr and **Peter Kazmir** opened the discussion on Regional Conventions. Everything from conventions dates, how to draw in the public, and how to make the convention available the smaller cities was discussed.

The concept of forming a convention committee to help provide needed services not available in all regions like registration, web, hotel/facilities negotiations, and other services. The idea is to provide a group of people with skills to help the local host committee bring an LSR convention to their division. An exploration **committee** was formed to study and flesh out this new group. The committee consists of Donna Orr, Peter Kazmir, Joe Leising, Riley Triggs, Divina Gato-Hogno, Marc LaChey, Rod Fredericks, and Bob Thiele.

Ray Byer opened a discussion on Contest Awards. He reviewed the history of expenses associated with contest room awards. This was an awareness discussion on the on-going expenses associated with the contest room.

Steve Sandifer, the LSR Treasurer, presented a discussion about placing some of the LSR funds into various interest-bearing accounts/instruments like CDs, and other possible investments. He pointed out that over most of the past decade, interest bearing funds were non-existent but now that has changed. Steve presented a **motion** to invest about at least \$30K in 3 \$10K CDs. Now that we have over \$50K, that may be increased. Most CDs are only 7-9 months right now. Pete Leach seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Donna Orr presented the Pathfinder document from the Pacific Northwest Region (PNR) of the NMRA. The document outlines retention and recruitment methods being used by the PNR. She presented the document as something our region/divisions might want to look at to help in our efforts.

Donna Orr presented the results from the 2023 NMRA Convention. She announced that all issues and books with the NMRA have been closed. Overall, the convention was a success for the LSR. The LSR, and Divisions 1 & 3 (host committee), who hosted the NMRA convention, are going to receive about \$65K. To date, the LSR has received \$9K as a first installment on their role in the convention. Divisions 1 and 3 are scheduled to receive \$20.7K in the next few weeks as the books are closed. A thank you was given to Donna for her outstanding efforts in pulling off a great convention.

Donna Orr presented **Bill Dryden** the President's Award for his outstanding efforts to track, remind, and publish LSR Events for the past several decades. Congratulations Bill for a job well done!

Donna Orr presented the **motion** to adjourn. Ray Byer seconded the motion and the motion passed.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who served on the board over the past decade and say Thank You for allowing me to go along for the ride. Jeff Palmer, MMR **ML**



Director and Department Reports

Cowcatcher Division 1



by Dick Brannan
director@cowcatcherdivision.org



cowcatcherdivision.com

The Cowcatcher Division had a great second half of the year. Participation of Division 1 members in the NMRA International Convention, 2023 Texas Express, was very strong with many members on the convention leadership team, holding open houses and operating sessions, performing clinics, and of course just general attendance at the convention.

Our monthly meeting attendance continues to hover around 50 members attending with usually a guest or two. We had a number of outstanding clinics in the fall including two Zoom clinics, one by Bob Frankrone doing a "Love Those Loads" clinic and one on the NMRA gauge which included its history as well how to properly use the gauge put on by Brian Bart, a member of the Standards and Conformance Committee. Duane Richardson, MMR also put on an outstanding "Make and Take" clinic where the members built a laser cut loading dock in N, HO, or O scale depending on their respective preference. Finishing off the year was our annual Christmas Party with 55 – 60 members and guests participating in the "White Elephant" gift exchange.

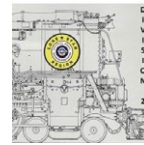
The Division also participated in helping with the Union Pacific Family Day held in mid October at UP's Davidson Yard. We had about 20 volunteers from the Division helping with set up, parking, registration, and "swag bag" distribution.

The Cowcatcher Division looks forward to a great 2024 and especially attending the LSR Convention in Houston.

Bayou Division 2



by Rod Fredericks
fredericks.rod@gmail.com



Medical problems have curtailed my activities as Division 2 director since last March. It has been a long road of numerous doctor visits and medical tests culminating in major heart surgery in August, and a long recovery. Follow-up cardiac PT and family and friends' support has gotten me nearly back to my old self again. And after having to miss the National Convention in last August, I am so looking forward the LSR convention in February.

I am also back to exploring the possibility of hosting the 2025 LSR Convention in the Baton Rouge/New Orleans area. After visiting several hotels in the Baton Rouge area, we have found a few sites that look very promising. All are on the south side of town adjacent to I-10 and I-12, which provides access to the New Orleans area only 80 minutes away. More on that to come.

I also plan to start holding Division 2 meetings. These meetings could have clinics, visits to clubs and members layouts, perhaps operation sessions, etc. Communication is the key to a successful division. I would be happy to hear any ideas you may have. Contact me at fredericks.rod@gmail.com.

So that's all for now. Happy model railroading.

Trinity River Division 3



by Charles Goodrich, MMR
director@cowcatcherdivision.org



trinityriverdivision.org

Division 3 has returned to pre-pandemic levels in attendance with between 30 and 45 people attending. Because I have not written a BOD report in a while, I have outlined all of our clinics for 2023 and January 2024. Following are the clinics we have had for the past year

January 2024 Jeff Palmer presented a clinic entitled "Track Issues". He talked about building and maintaining track to minimize derailments.

December 2023 - Annual Christmas party at Donna Orr's and Roger Shanks home.



November 2023 - Keith Stamper presented a clinic that featured a virtual tour of his railroad, the Colorado and Rio Grande Southern.

October 2023 - Duane Richardson presented a make-and-take clinic featuring a jig for building trees.

September 2023 - Jeff Palmer presented a clinic on lubrication.

July 2023 - Thomas Stephens gave a clinic entitled "Speed Matching for DCC Locomotives".

June 2023 - Steve Crise gave a photographic presentation of the Nevada Northern R.R.

May 2023 - Thomas Stephens presented a clinic on DC vs DCC plus JMRI for Dummies.

April 2023 - Dave Ackmann presented a clinic entitled "Generators". Dave has developed free online tools that make 3-D printing easier.

March 2023 - Jeff Palmer gave a clinic on building Deciduous Trees using Sagebrush and Super Tree material.

February 2023 - Jerry Hoverson presented a clinic on Modeling Water. Jerry discussed several methods that create an acceptable water feature for our layouts.

January 2023 - Charles Goodrich presented a clinic on Painting, Decaling and Weathering a Locomotive.

The Plano Train Show was a success this year. Division 3 members put on clinics for the show as well as a couple of booth clinics at the division booth. The show is jointly sponsored by both Division 1 and 3 and is held twice a year,

Division 3 meets at Christ the King Lutheran church in Allen. The church has been very gracious in providing a meeting place and lets our group concentrate on meeting content instead of finding a place to

meet. Meetings are held on the third Saturday each month at 10:00 AM unless there is a conflict with other events.

We continued our segment on Tips and Tricks.

Still popular is the show and tell segment where members bring what they are working on to show the group. This is a venue that allows people to show off their modeling skills and gives people a chance to be more involved.

Cen-Tex Division 4



by Bob Thiele
director@centexnmra.org



centexnmra.org

The division has been active participating in bimonthly meetings and working on group projects. The Austin Model Railway Society, an all-NMRA modular group, has been interacting with the public and modifying the Austin downtown portion for better ease of operations.

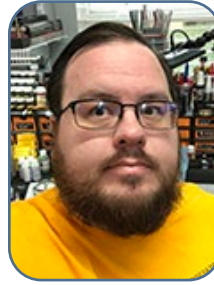
A project that the division has undertaken as a group is a portable shelf layout. The membership has input on each of the phases of construction. At each phase of construction, clinics that relate to the construction are presented by the members. So far clinics which have been presented are roadbed using ridge insulation and cork, wiring technique using different components, hand laid track and switches. Other clinics to be presented will be scratch building/kit bashing buildings and structures. Members of the Division will be constructing the structure for the shelf layout. There will be several clinics on scenery and weathering.

The Division is in the process of updating its website. All meetings that have been recorded on Zoom will be uploaded to the site. Clinics that include PowerPoint will be added. New topics have been added to the home page so the public can get a greater understanding of what we do. We are making a to effort get more public awareness by traveling to train shows and youth-orientated events. We set up David Barrow's South Plains modular layout. The public is invited to operate the layout.

The AMRS in conjunction with Hope Presbyterian church sponsor a Breakfast with Santa. After breakfast, the public is invited to tour the modular layout. Kids can run a consist around the layout and all questions a welcomed. At this time, they are planning the next Austin Train show which will be at the end of August.

The membership total has made a small gain with help from AMRS and exposure from the train show. It is the Division's goal to attend three train shows a year with the South Plains modules to expose the public to model railroading.

West Texas Division 5



by Brooks Willig
Headroadie2004@gmail.com

[Newsletter](#)

Division 5 is going strong and growing. We are up 6 members since the start of 2023. In June we had a weekend meetup for division members. This meeting was held at the American Windmill Museum June 16-17, 2023. During this week the Lubbock Model Railroad Association had their modular layouts and other setups on display at the museum. Several clinics were presented on Friday and Saturday by Laurence Ertner, Adam Chavez, Mike Mackey, Henry Crawford, Don Winn, and Shelley Harris. The weekend concluded with a dinner and Mike Mackey giving the keynote address. We had 3 new members sign up that weekend.

The Abilene Model Railroaders Society has moved into its new building and recently held an open house in December.

Division 5 member Spanky Fuentes won the Judges Award at the 2023 Texas Express National Convention.

View the division's previous meeting recordings. <https://www.youtube.com/@NMRALSRD5>.

Sign up for updates from the division and when we are holding our monthly meetings go with this link. <http://eepurl.com/hRLLm9>.

Till next time keep on modeling and be happy.

South Texas Division 6



by Don Winn, MMR
donnswinn@gmail.com



It has now been over a year since we transitioned from the South Texas Railroad Socials to official Division 6 meetings, and I'm pleased to report that things are going very well. We have stepped up the meeting frequency from quarterly to bi-monthly, meeting the 2nd Saturday of even-numbered months to offset Division 4 which meets on the odd-numbered months. Attendance has remained steady at 25-30 participants.

The next step is to develop a working committee for the division and find people to fill some of the critical chairs, such as membership. After 6 years as the director, I have decided to step down, but not before finding a replacement. Roy Kaiser has agreed to run in the upcoming election. Special thanks to Bob Thomas, who has been a great help, and has agreed to continue to support the division as our social media chair and to share his expertise for the Tips and Tricks segment of our meetings.

If you are reading this in March, we should be in the midst of elections. Please vote! I am feeling a little burned out and figured it was a good time to get someone else to breathe some new thoughts into the program. I'll still be active in the region as the Education Chair, and will remain very active in our division activities. Running for Division 6 Director to replace me is Roy Kaiser, who has been a life member of the NMRA for nearly 50 years! I thank Roy for stepping up, and encourage you to support Roy to keep our division growing. I would like to see us get a real division committee established, and ask you to think about volunteering to join us.

Our regular October division meeting was "overshadowed"



by the big solar eclipse happening at the exact same time. We rescheduled for November 11th, which happens to be Veteran's Day (the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month). Our featured clinic by Roy Kaiser "Transferring Track Plans to Layout". One of Bob Thomas' Tips & Tricks was how to hold cars for painting. Ray Phillips hosted our home layout tour. The So. Texas & Gulf railroad is a huge layout on 3 levels.

At our December meeting, I presented a clinic on the Ten Commandments of yard design. One of the tips that Bob Thomas shared was where to find resources for paint matching. With it being the holidays, we had a white elephant / dirty Santa gift exchange. It was fun! Brian Kelly hosted our home layout tour. Brian has built a 4x8 layout, and now is finalizing plans to build off of that to fill the entire room.

Our featured clinic at our February meeting was Al Boos,



MRR presenting his techniques for building highly detailed wooden water tanks. I presented a mini-clinic on creating a railroad pass / business card styled after my prototype's railroad pass. One of Bob Thomas' tips was the valuable info you can find on Sanborn maps. An interesting gift in Deal or Dud this month was a custom steel sign, courtesy of James at Maverick Metalwork. It is an example of what he can produce for your layout room.

If you haven't been to our division meetings in a while, I invite you to come back and join us. There is always something interesting being shared. Thanks so much to our Deal or Dud sponsors: Discount Model Trains (972) 931-8135, Prototype N Scale Models (protonscale@yahoo.com), Bob Thomas and Maverick Metalwork (james@maverickmetalwork.com).

Our next meetings for the year are April 13th and June 8th. Still at 11:00 AM at the Longhorn Café at 12311 Nacogdoches Rd, San Antonio, TX 78217. As always, if there is anything I can do to help you in your modeling, please don't hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at donnswinn@gmail.com and (940) 391-0950.

SAFETY FIRST – Be careful out there.

North Louisiana Division 7



by Don Kimmell
elf4kcs@me.com

It has been a quiet six months on the modeling front. Membership has held steady despite our local economy. We did a brief poll of our members (e-mail & phone) and there was not a great desire to get together, mainly a time/distance issue.

On the local front, work is moving along on the Sue Lines rehab while its new home is under construction. More to follow when available.

The small layout located in our Sci Port IMAX room is not running while the projectors are being upgraded to digital. Hopefully it will be running again in the future.

The new railroad, Canadian Pacific Kansas City, ran all of their Holiday Trains this season. It was interesting to say the least. The Holiday Express (old KCS) covered the southern part of the system, while the two Holiday trains covered all of Canada, the East and Midwest. The Mexican edition also ran. It was a bit hard to keep track of who was where. When the schedules were shown to the KCS Historical Society someone made the comment that they were "banging the corners!" We sure did. Meridian, MS on the east, Wyle, TX on the west, LaPlace, LA to the southeast and Victoria, TX to the southwest. Another change was we did a bit more daylight running, which was a refreshing change. In years past, we would run part or all of the night to reach the next location, so one, sort of, got used to sleeping on a moving train. It did make for some interesting sleeping positions. Everyone - both workers (elves) and the public - enjoyed the show.

I did do two Operation Lifesaver presentations, one to a Boy Scout Troop in the old Minden shops (L&A/KCS), the other in Vicksburg for a "Garden Club" (outdoor railroad layout). While in Meridian, I visited with the city's Boys and Girls club who wish to build a layout. I put them in contact with some local modelers.

Texas Gulf Division 8



by Phil Stewart
pstewart1225@yahoo.com



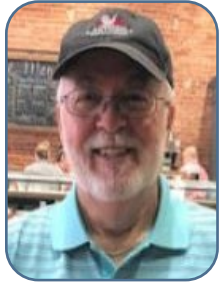
texasgulfdivision.org

2023 was the year of the clinic in Division 8. We are continuing that in 2024. We wanted to emphasize clinics that would help folks toward earning achievement awards and ultimately their MMR. The other clinics we did in 2023 and want to continue in 2024 emphasized prototype roads and operation. Even though as a modeler we model a particular road or freelance we can always learn how other railroads did things. Our January clinic will be about operations of the New York Central. Hopefully in the next year we'll have a couple of members closer to becoming an MMR.

Elections are coming up at our next meeting. We hope to have a full slate of candidates eager to make Division 8 bigger and better than ever.

We are looking for clinicians for 2024. If you are interested please contact Phil Stewart. We want to emphasize make-and-take clinics for projects for cars, structures, electronics and scenery. Again the goal is to push the Achievement Program so with that being said I have volunteered my layout for division members to help them with their achievement awards for scenery and electrical. One of the things that the NMRA teaches us is to share our knowledge with others. I got my electrical and scenery achievement awards years ago so I'm here to help. There are some bare spaces on my layout that can use some help with scenery and getting a train around the track.

Director At-Large



by Darrell Cowles
darrellcowles1@gmail.com

Thank you to all who helped, worked shifts, or coordinated the most recent Region and National conventions. I believe they were both huge successes thanks to your efforts. The Houston convention is approaching very quickly and I hope it will be as well done. Visiting with members at the recent convention, at the Plano train show, and online makes me believe that the hobby is secure for the immediate future, but the overriding concern is the much-discussed lack of appeal to younger people. While the NMRAX YouTube web events are good, in that they are in the mobile format, do they actually attract younger people into the hobby? How do we measure this? Can we measure this?

While visiting with an officer in the local National Railway Historical Society a couple of years ago after a meeting, I was told they face exactly the same issue of attracting younger members. I was told that 15-20 years ago, there were 20,000+ members and now there are only about 8,000. I haven't seen, or are unaware of, any programs they have implemented to draw in younger people; are they destined to just disappear? I hope not. I am encouraged by the emphasis the NMRA has given to attract younger people, but think it must be an ongoing battle. The local Plano train shows attract families which brings children into contact with the hobby, perhaps for the first time. But how do we keep exposing them to the hobby when we only have two public events per year that are priced family-friendly?

I would suggest we add some additional exposure by asking local clubs with permanent layouts to open for the public a couple times per year. Even modular clubs can do this if they have a venue that allows public visits. Who knows, they might even pick up a new member or two! The Texas Western has now had two Holiday Open Houses and one summer Open House that is advertised in the local community and in the hobby. The most recent saw a 20% increase in attendance with mostly families attending. If more clubs could do this, then we could constantly offer the chance for young people to become exposed and interested in model railroading.

It feels like spring, or actually early summer, is here instead of it still being February. Still time to spend hours at the hobby table building for your layout. I had scheduling conflicts and didn't get to attend the Houston convention, but 2 of the Texas

Western Model RR Club members brought home 4 awards for their contest models. Excellent work Russell Gifford and David Crumpton MMR 747. From the photos I saw, their entries were excellent!

I was saddened to hear recently that the 7-1/2" gauge Annetta Valley and Western may be closing soon. I have visited this excellent grand scale railroad built by Terry McGrath and friends several times and enjoyed it immensely. Seems there is a lot of new home building in the area and the land values may be the demise of this fine railroad. While we build in Z to G scales in the Lone Star Region, I hope you have had the opportunity to take a ride on the 7-1/2" scale trains. My wife and I have ridden a lot of these over the past years and even made it to Train Mountain in Oregon twice for the Triennial Meet. Great times!

As summer gets here don't forget your clubs and modular layouts. They need some of your time too, even though the outdoors is calling!

Director At-Large



by Michael Harang
miharang@gmail.com

2023 Texas Express and Beyond

WOW, AMAZING, SPECTACULAR, VAST, INCREDIBLE - After attending my 1st NMRA National Convention at the 2023 Texas Express in August at the Gaylord Texan, putting the experience into words is a true challenge! Also, being on the organizational committee as the Convention Photographer, and having the pleasure of working with so many talented people was simply a joy. Yes, it was a lot of work and a large commitment, but definitely worth it, and something I would do again if the opportunity presents itself. Throughout the year-long plus planning phase and the almost two week execution phase (at least for me), watching this convention come together and unfold before my eyes was synonymous with watching a well oiled machine - it kinda of reminded me of all of the pieces and parts in a K28 steam engine - each designed to fit a special need and requirement, and working in unison for a common goal.

So, what is the BEYOND? For one, the LSR 2024 Convention "Where the Eagle meets the Chief" is to be held 15 - 17 February 2024 in Pasadena, Texas. This looks to be a great convention and one not to be missed. If you attended the 2023 Texas Express, parlay that experience into the LSR 2024 Convention and keep your train moving on down the tracks.

Also, look over Bill Dryden's "Up The Tracks Event Calendar" in the current issue of the *Marker Lamp*. Here is listed all manner of events, train shows, meetings, excursions. We in the LSR are highly fortunate to have a large and diverse event calendar at our fingertips, so getting involved and getting out there is really easy to do.

Then, there is the NMRA 2024 National Convention to be held in Long Beach, California on 4 - 11 August. Pursuing their website recently, they have a great line up planned for us. If you have never attended a National Convention, do yourself and your hobby a favor and go!

In closing, my message to you is two-fold: Get out there and experience what this great hobby has to offer, and to get involved. There is truly something for everyone and at every level. I recall the graduation speech given to my son's 8th Grade class and the speaker's message was simply to "get involved". He told those students that the most boring thing would be to just go to high school classes and then go

home. From my perspective, being involved in something leads to an enriching, rewarding, and fulfilling life. If you want to participate but are not sure what to do or how, just ask someone on the LSR Board - we're here to help you. Being part of the LSR committee for the past few years and participating in the committee for the 2023 Texas Express has given me the opportunity to meet many people and experience many different things that I would otherwise not have done.

Director At-Large



by Pete Leach, MMR
pleachtx55@gmail.com

This should be my last report for the position of Director at Large for the LSR. It's been 4 years, and I am not seeking another term.

The past few months have been busy with modeling, preparing for clinics, and writing an article for the GAZETTE (due out in May.)

A few months ago, Chuck Lind and Bob Barnett asked me to be the Registrar for this year's LSR Convention in Houston. I gladly accepted but had no idea what was involved. I do like working with spreadsheets and numbers, so I did my best to keep up and provide Chuck and Bob updates and a final tally. I will let them provide the results. I can say, it kept me very busy during the convention. I must recognize Laurie Lind for her great assistance and dedication! Thanks Laurie!

In addition to being the registrar, Bob asked me to do a couple clinics at the convention. The first was my Backdrop Painting clinic. I've done this before, and it never gets old for me. It is a make-and-take clinic with up to 8 participants. We had a good session on Thursday evening with great results for the 9 participants (we had an extra person we squeezed in.) The observing audience got a first-hand look at the progress. My second clinic was a look at the evolution of the commercial ice business in New England and my attempts to do it justice in model form. With a scheduled time of 9 pm on Friday, I was quite surprised and pleased with the larger turnout. I estimate over 30 folks came. The feedback was very positive, and everyone appeared to enjoy the evening.

As I depart the Board of Directors, I want to thank the current and past members for their support. I wish the new incoming members good luck and to enjoy their time.

[Note: Pete's report from the December 2023 Marker Lamp is what was submitted for the BOD report.]

Achievement Program



by Duane Richardson, MMR
LSR Achievement Chair
pinecreekstation@verizon.net

Here is what has taken place since the last report:

| First | Last | Certificate | LSR # |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|------------|
| Thomas | Stephens | Volunteer | 898 |
| Mike | Armstrong | Scenery | 899 |
| Chris | Atkins | Volunteer | 900 |
| Chris | Atkins | Author | 901 |
| David | Crumpton | Chief Dispatcher | 902 |
| David | Crumpton | MMR | 903 |
| Pete | Leach, MMR | Motive Power | 904 |
| Jackobs | Steven | Electrical | 905 |
| Chris | Atkins | Chief Dispatcher | 906 |
| Duran de And | Ing. Ezequiel | Electrical | 907 |
| Cliff | Cheeseman | Volunteer | 908 |
| Jackobs | Steven | Structures | 909 |

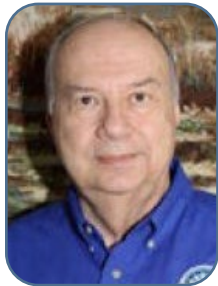
Congratulations to our newest MMR, David Crumpton, pictured below.



Contests



by Ray Byer
LSR Contest Co-Chair
raybyer@yahoo.com



and Jeff Palmer, MMR
LSR Contest Co-Chair
res06wqv@gte.net

With the NMRA National convention this past August 2023, there has been minimal activity involving the Contest Room. Ray and I continue to review expenses and how to reduce them.

Report on the contest at the 2024 LSR Convention:

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total Number of Entries in the Model Contest: | 24 |
| Total Number of Entries in Arts & Crafts: | 5 |
| Total Number of Entries in Photos: | 36 |
| Total Number of Entries in Special Contest: | n/a |
| Grand Total of All Entries: | 65 |
| Number of Models that Merited: | 15 |

The full list of winners (and volunteers) was listed earlier in this issue of the *Marker Lamp*.

Conventions



by Joe Leising
LSR Conventions Chair
joe@leising.com

The Cowcatcher and Trinity River Divisions co-hosted the 2023 NMRA National Convention this past August. Nearly 1,000 attendees from around the globe registered, visiting to experience the Dallas/Fort Worth prototype train attractions, area layouts, amazing clinic schedule, and Texas Hospitality. The convention was not only a financial success which benefited both host divisions as well as the Lone Star Region, but some constant national convention attendees have commented that the 2023 convention was one of, if not the best convention that they have ever attended. A special thank you to the clinicians, volunteers, and convention committee members, as well as to those who attended expressing their support, all contributing to making the 2023 Texas Express Convention a tremendous success.

Congratulations are due to the many LSR Members who received awards at the National Contest Room, and to LSR President and Texas Express Convention Chairman Donna Orr, who received the NMRA's Presidents Award.

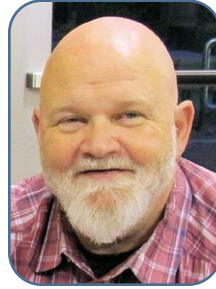
Future national NMRA conventions are planned for Long Beach, CA in 2024, Novi (Detroit), MI in 2025, and Chattanooga, TN in 2026.

The Texas Gulf Division will be hosting this year's regional convention, Where The Eagle Meets The Chief, in Pasadena, TX. A great line up of clinics, operating sessions, and layout tours, with free admission and early admittance to the Greater Houston Train Show is scheduled to take place February 15 – 17, 2024. In addition to access to the train show, registration also includes the Saturday Evening Banquet. Dinner tickets are available as a separate registration event for individuals that will not be participating in the other convention activities. Come visit and operate on amazing layouts, and reunite with old friends and make new ones.

A special thank you to Chuck Lind, Bob Barnett and the entire Texas Gulf Division for stepping up to host the 2024 regional convention after a different division defaulted on their commitment to do so.

Two weekend dates in July 2025 are being looked at for the Lone Star Regional Convention, to take place in Baton Rouge, LA. Bayou Division 2 Director Rod Fredericks has identified possible locations for the convention that will be researched to determine the best convention venue. More information will be provided once it is available.

Events



by Bill Dryden
LSR Events Chair
bdr149@airmail.net

Opportunities are available for 2026 and beyond to host the annual Lone Star Region Convention. Do you want to stimulate the economy for your area and finances for your division? Do you want to showcase the talents of modelers in your division? Contact Convention Chair Joe Leising at Joe@Leising.com to starting planning for your division to host an annual Lone Star Region convention.

Some of my better sources dropped off-line, but I still have a few several good sources for up-coming events and I am continually soliciting new events. I will visit the web site for each published event to assure that the site is still active and provides the reader with needed information concerning the respective show. Occasionally, notices [still] arrive between a day to a week after the column has been submitted. I respond with a revised column to the editor; some actually get there before the issue has been finalized. <sigh!> Further, I will advise the sender of the situation, with a reminder of our deadlines for future submittals.

Overall, I am keeping up with the known events within our Region. ALL submittals are greatly appreciated.

Anyone having events to be published, please send me the details: bdr149@airmail.net.

A reminder to all:

Please consider our deadlines for submittals and publications to allow adequate lead time to correctly announce your event – Column submission deadlines are the 15th of February, May, August, and November; publication of the *Marker Lamp* is the following month.

[Editor's Note: The Education Chair transitioned from John Lorange, MMR to Don Winn, MMR earlier this year. As a result of this recent change, no report was received.]



by Bob Barnett, MMR
LSR Historian
Barnett6@sbcglobal.net

We are continuing to assemble information on Longtime LSR members and well-known layouts. This has turned out to be a very involved but rewarding undertaking. So far we have a file on several well-known modelers and several famous layouts. We are pursuing leads on many more.

The next planned articles for publication are Larry Redmond and His Parallax Railroad and The Houston Society of Model Engineers.

Written to date are:

1. *The Houston Society of Model Engineers* with much help from former HSME President Art Borman (Published in this issue of the *Marker Lamp*).
2. *The Houston, Smithville and Indian Territory* layout of Fred Schmiedekind in Houston (Published in a recent *Marker Lamp*).
3. *The Parallax Railroad* of Larry Redmond being prepared in cooperation with Randall Wilson and Rick White who were regular operators on the Parallax.
4. *Stony Creek and Western* of Gil and Virginia Freitag, being prepared by Randall Wilson from the excellent private print book he did several years ago on the SC&W. This is actually a process of boiling down information and photos from Randall's private publication book and numerous articles published in the *Derail* on the 50th Anniversary of the SC&W.

Next up: Several famous layouts around the Lone Star Region are next in line:

1. *The Texas & Rio Grande* of Bill McClanahan,
2. *The Marquette Union Terminal* of Cliff Robinson. Both of these have been published in the hobby press so information and limited photos are available. James Peterson furnished informative feedback on these famous early Dallas layout owners as his father was active with these modelers and James knew these layout owners in his youth.
3. Bob Clark's *Ironhead Timber Company* - Chuck Lind will undertake this one with input from the narrow gauge/logging fraternity in the LSR.

Help needed: Several famous LSR layouts that are still up and running need in-depth documentation:

- *The Texas Western* in Fort Worth.
- *The Cowtown Model Railroad Club* (successor to the General Dynamics club layout).
- *San Antonio Model Railroad Club* (SAMRA) - the lavishly detailed masterpiece in San Antonio.
- *Texas Northern Model Railroad Club*.
- *All Points North Model Railroad Club* Conroe/North Houston Area.

And...based on my recent trip to the Plano Train Show, there are a lot of active clubs in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, some with permanent layouts and some modular layouts, that need documentation. More to come!!!

Membership



by Ken Kaiser
Outgoing LSR Membership Chair
kbk1@flash.net

Once again, we managed to keep our numbers above the water line.

We gained 83 members by December. We started at 899 and ended with 962. We had an excellent recruiting program which signed up 240 new members. However, with 240 new members we should have ended the year with 1,098 members. That means we actually lost 136 members.

There are many valid reasons why individuals chose not to renew their membership. If we are to stop the bleeding of non-renewals more attention needs to be placed on retaining the members that we have. To do this each Division must do several things.

- 1) Contact members who fail to show up for the monthly meetings or sign on to the ZOOM meetings for two consecutive months and find out why they didn't attend. You may be able to prevent a membership loss.
- 2) Ensure a designated member of the Division staff contacts each member who was on the 30-day delinquency list to determine why they chose not to renew their membership. Use text, email and lastly telephone. I know it is hard to hear negative comments and you may not like what you hear. However, by listening to their concerns we may be able to improve the services we provide to our members and reduce the number of non-renewals.

Based on the letters sent to members on the 60-day delinquency list, membership cost had been the primary reason for members not renewing their membership.

Now that the membership fee has been reduced to \$68, that reason has reduced significantly. We are now hearing that members are not renewing due to their inability to travel to the meeting locations and interact with fellow train modelers. We may be able to mitigate this if every Division is holding Zoom meetings.



by Jared Roberts
Incoming LSR Membership Chair
jroberts0418@gmail.com

[Note: After the BOD meeting, the Membership Chair transitioned from Ken Kaiser to Jared Roberts. Here is his initial report. -Ed.]

I'll be taking over as our regional membership chair. Thank you Ken for handling it the last five years. I am a member of Division 1 and live in Denton, TX. I model the EJE railroad in HO scale. I am married with 2 sons and have come back to the hobby after taking 20 years off. I am looking forward to meeting more of you and seeing our membership grow and thrive. If I can be of any assistance, please let me know.

Membership Report:

| Division | Members |
|--------------|------------|
| 1 | 184 |
| 2 | 80 |
| 3 | 204 |
| 4 | 141 |
| 5 | 34 |
| 6 | 80 |
| 7 | 24 |
| 8 | 204 |
| Total | 951 |

Nominations



by Pete Leach, MMR
LSR Nominations Chair
pleachtx55@gmail.com

The 2024 elections of officers is underway! Up for election, or reelection are the following positions:

- Vice President
- Secretary
- Div 2 Director
- Div 4 Director
- Div 6 Director
- Div 8 Director
- ALL 3 Director at Large positions

We currently have people running for all positions. Thank you! The region cannot run without good people taking a leadership role.

Non-Rail



by Divina Gato-Hogno
LSR Non-Rail Chair
d.gatohogno@gmail.com

(No report received)

Photography



by Michael Harang
LSR Photography Chair
bu1977@att.net

(No report received)

Publications



by Peter Kazmir
LSR Publications Chair and
Marker Lamp Editor & Publisher
peter@centexnmra.org

After numerous interruptions and personal issues, the *Marker Lamp* should be back on its normal schedule going forward, with the next issue planned for March 15 (submission deadline February 15). I won't go into all of the various reasons for the delays, but I do want to offer my sincere apologies.

At the moment, I am experimenting with tools to publish the *Marker Lamp* as an online "web magazine", where you can view and read content organized like a website, similar to a news website, or a site like *Railroad Model Craftsman's*. This will have several advantages:

- It will be easier and more accessible to read, as you won't have to download a large PDF document, you can access it from any browser (like your phone), and you will be able to easily adjust settings like font size and contrast settings if needed.
- It will allow multiple people to work on the *Marker Lamp* at the same time, so we could have folks upload and edit their own columns and articles (if they want to). (And in general, publishing the *Marker Lamp* will no longer require strong working knowledge of software like Adobe InDesign.)
- It will be much faster and easier to publish, as most of the work is laying out the articles and photos in InDesign by hand.
- It will enforce consistency in format and provide better linking to external sites and sources. It will also enable video to be included with articles.
- It would give us the ability to publish content anytime we want, not just quarterly, although that is not a primary goal.

Just to be clear, the vision here is not to move to a "digital publication" using an app like Zinio (like *Model Railroader* or the *NMRA Magazine*), because that would not give us most of the advantages listed above (digital publications still require a PDF file). This would be published on the LSR website using what is called a "Content Management System".

If there are folks out there who still prefer to download a single PDF file, I am working on a mechanism to allow that. I am also going to ensure we can archive each "issue". Finally, I don't expect this to cost the LSR any ongoing fees.

I also want to mention that the LSR Google Drive is now set up and configured. There are a number of pre-defined folders set up for various departments and functions, as well as folders for each officer and chair. Of course, we can change the set up however we need to as time goes on.

I will close with my usual plea for content for the *Marker Lamp*. We do have several folks who are contributing regular columns now (thanks folks!) but it's still difficult to get "main articles". If there is anything you can contribute, please contact me. I am willing to edit whatever you have – even if it's not in article format (like a clinic/PowerPoint presentation, a review, a collection of photos, or even a video) – and it can be about any aspect of model railroading (or prototype railroading). If you're interested, someone else who reads the *Marker Lamp* will be too. (And officers and chairs, please don't forget to submit your reports.)

Thanks, and keep the FUN in model railroading!

Publicity



by Riley Triggs
LSR Publicity Chair
rileytriggs@gmail.com

(No report received)

Youth



by Chuck Lind, MMR
LSR Youth Chair
chucklind46@gmail.com
979-219-3305

We have 4 youth award nominations for this year to be approved:

- Division 4 - Kavish Nave
- Division 5 - Danny Joe Gumaer
- Division 6 - Noah Hunter & Ramsey Bush

Since there are 2 nominations from Division 6, one will have to be a Board Youth.

Treasurer



by Steve Sandifer
LSR Treasurer
steve.sandifer@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer Report:

Balance as of 1/1/2024: \$44,191.77

Income:

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Marker Lamp Ads (4) | \$172.00 |
| National Convention | \$9,835.16 |
| Plano Commission | \$56.25 |
| Total Income: | <u>\$10,023.35</u> |

Expenses:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Youth Awards (3) | -\$120.00 |
| Total Expenses: | <u>-\$120.00</u> |

Balance as of 02/26/2024: \$54,135.18

GET OUT THE WORD!

Color

Ads Available



Raise awareness for your business, model railroad, club or event while supporting the Lone Star Region by placing an ad in the Marker Lamp.

- Want to let everyone know about your latest product?
- Looking to build membership in your club?
- Want to attract model railroaders to your show?
- Do you have a special feature or crack express train on your layout?

Let everyone know about it with a color ad!

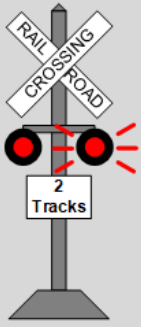
100% NMRA clubs and LSR divisions receive a \$30 discount - the equivalent of a free half-page ad!

Ad prices per year (four issues):

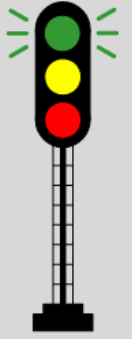
- Full page: \$50
- Half page: \$30 (horizontal or vertical)
- Quarter page: \$15
- Pike ads (~1/8 page): \$8

For more information or to submit an ad, contact:

Steve Sandifer
steve.sandifer@sbcglobal.net



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other operations-oriented products?
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Signal Circuits (photocell, IR detection or use your detectors)

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Signals: Tomar, Atlas, NJI, Details West

Digital Fast Clocks: for Digitrax LocoNet and NCE Cab Bus

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**The 2024
Lone Star Region Election
is underway. Don't forget to**



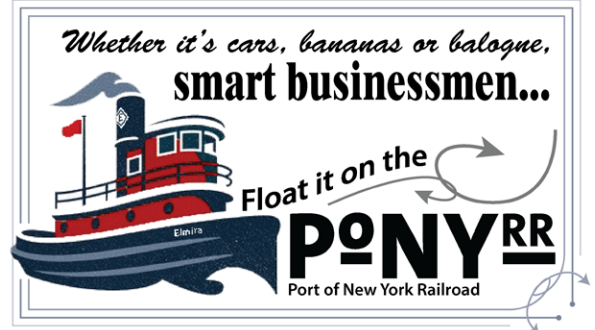
before March 31!

**Check your email for a link to the ballot
or contact pleachtx55@gmail.com.**

PIKE ADS

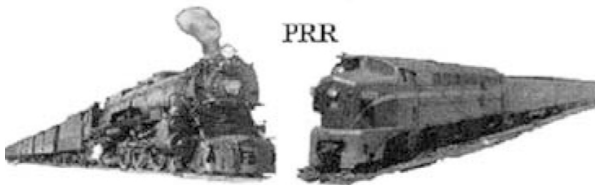
ACME & MINERAL CITY RAILROAD

Bill Dryden
469-964-8571
Georgetown, Texas
bdlr149@airmail.net
Life Member NMRA & LSR




Riley Triggs | ponyrr.blogspot.com

THE ALLEGHENY RAILROAD HORSESHOE CURVE ALTOONA



Jerry Schoenberg
Carrollton, Texas (972) 242-9053
arrjerry@aol.com



Pennsylvania Railroad Laurel Valley Secondary



Pittsburgh Division Circa 1957
Brady McGuire, Sherman, Texas
903-820-9420
Southwestern Pennsylvania in Texas O Scale



New Members & Visitors Welcome!
How-to Clinics - Operating Sessions - Family Activities

N'Crowd Model Railroad Society
4007-E Bellaire Blvd., Houston, Texas
www.houstonNcrowd.org

Texas Western Model Railroad Club

6808 Forest Hill Drive, Forest Hill, TX 76140 (682) 587-2092



Membership is Open!
Visitors Welcome, See twmrc.org for Days/Times
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There's plenty of room for more - add your pike today!



The Marker Lamp

*Submission deadline for
next issue is May 15*

